

[Cifford, S. Thos.]

Stable.
S.

Bible - Gospels - Harmonies [English]

FORTY MEDITATIONS
ON THE
PASSION
OF
Our Blessed Saviour
FOR
THE FORTY DAYS OF LENT:

Translated from the Evangile Médité.

BY T. C.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
THE PASSION
OF OUR
Lord Jesus Christ,
ACCORDING TO THE
HARMONY OF THE FOUR EVANGELISTS.

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PREFACE.

THE merit of the *Evangile Médité*, from which the following pages are translated, is so universally acknowledged, that it would be superfluous to say any thing in its praise. To the English reader it may be necessary to observe, that the said work is a Commentary on the whole text of the Gospel History, in the order in which it stands according to the Harmony of the four Evangelists, digested into a series of 365 Meditations, one for every day in the year, and comprised in 8 vol. 8vo. The labour of translating, and the expense of publishing, so considerable a work, are,

perhaps, the reasons why it has never yet appeared in an English dress.

The present translation originated in a wish to employ piously a few leisure hours during the holy time of Lent. The consideration of the Passion of our blessed Saviour, being particularly recommended to the devotion of the faithful, at that season, the Translator naturally directed his labours to that part of the work. As he advanced, he discovered that all the Meditations which relate to that most interesting portion of the Gospel, amounted to forty in number; and it occurred to him, that they would form a very useful devotional work for the forty days of Lent; at which period, most Christians are used to consecrate a larger portion of their time to pious reading and reflection.

With this view, he communicated his idea, and some specimens of his execution of it, to persons, on whose piety and judgment he could rely; who advised him to complete and publish the work. In their opinion he has acquiesced.

In behalf of his performance, he will not avail himself of the usual plea of many avocations and want of leisure, but will freely confess, that it has cost him much time and labour; and, that he has used his best endeavours, to make it worthy of the original. He has taken some liberties with the text, in order to render it more suitable to the taste of the English reader. For instance, he has discarded the connecting sentences, by which the divisions and subdivisions of the Meditations, in the original, are

often introduced, thinking that the connexion was sufficiently kept up, by placing at the head of each subdivision, that portion of the sacred text, which is therein discussed—as these texts uniformly follow each other, in the order in which they stand in the Harmony. In a few of the first Meditations he has ventured to omit some sentences, and even entire passages, which appeared less interesting than the rest, from an idea, that the Meditations would be found too long; but he soon became sensible, that whatever was omitted, was so much detracted from the beauty and value of the work, and he determined, in future, to confine himself scrupulously to the text of his author, which he has endeavoured to render as faithfully and literally, as the idiom of the

two languages would permit. He has prefixed the history of our Saviour's Passion, taken from the Harmony of the four Evangelists, which, he conceives, will be found very convenient and acceptable to the reader. He has throughout adopted the common English translation of the Bible, "appointed to be read in Churches," except in two or three instances only, where it differs from the Vulgate. His reason for giving this the preference is, 1st, because it appears to him the most idiomatic translation that exists in our language: 2dly, in the hope that this preference may contribute to render this little work acceptable to the various descriptions of Christians in this country, to whom that translation is most familiar. Happy indeed should he be, if the per-

sal of this interesting volume should be the means of bringing any of those, who are in error, to the knowledge of that true religion, which Jesus came down from Heaven to teach us, and the truth of which he sealed with his blood ! Most happy, if it should open the eyes of any one, of that numerous and respectable body of Christians, who are so unfortunate as not to acknowledge the Divinity of Jesus Christ !

N. B. The numerals, by which the Gospel narrative at the beginning of the work is subdivided, mark that portion of the sacred text which is the subject of each successive Meditation.



The Passion
of
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
ACCORDING TO THE
Harmony of the Four Evangelists.

I. JESUS and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be scandalized because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Peter answered, and said unto him, Though all shall be scandalized because of thee, yet will I never be scandalized. Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. Jesus answered him, Peter, I tell thee, that this day, even in this night,

before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice: But he spake the more vehemently: if I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. And, in like manner, said all the disciples.

II. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? and they said, Nothing: Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the wicked. For the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold; here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

III. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, to the mountain of Olives, according to his custom; and his disciples followed him. Then he came to a place called Gethsemani, where there was a garden, into which he entered with them. And he said to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray; pray ye also, that ye may not enter into temptation. And he took with him Peter, James, and John. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft times resorted thither with his disciples. Then

he began to fear and to be sad. And he said to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death : tarry ye here, and watch with me.

IV. And he went forward a little, about a stone's cast from them, and knelt down ; and, falling upon his face, prayed : and he said, Father, if it be possible, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me : nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them sleeping ; and he saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou ! couldst not thou watch one hour with me ? And he said unto them, Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The Spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And when he returned to them, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy) : neither knew they what to answer him. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

V. And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly : and his sweat was as drops of blood falling down to the ground.

VI. And when he rose up from prayer, and

was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow : and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Then he said to them, Sleep on now, and take your rest : it is enough, the hour is come : behold, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go : lo ! he that will betray me is at hand.

VII. While Jesus yet spake, lo ! Judas, one of the twelve, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and pharisees, cometh thither with lanthorns, and torches, and weapons, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he ; take him, and lead him away safely. And Judas went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him : and he said to him, Hail, master ! and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come ? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss ?

VIII. Then Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth to the multitude, and said unto them, Whom seek ye ? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward,

and fell to the ground. Jesus afterwards asked them again, Whom seek ye? And they answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you, that I am he; if therefore you seek me, let these go their way. That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them that thou gavest me, I have lost none.

IX. Now when they, who were about Jesus, saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them who stood by, Simon Peter, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And the servant's name was Malchus. But Jesus said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, That thus it must be? The cup, which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?

X. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders who were come to him, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid not

hold of me ; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.

XI. Then the band, and the captain, and the officers of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him.

XII. And they that laid hold on Jesus led him to Annas first ; for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high priest that same year. Now Caiphas was he, who gave counsel to the Jews, That it was expedient that one man should die for the people. Annas, therefore, sent him bound to Caiphas, the high priest : and they brought him into the high priest's house, where the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders were assembled. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world ; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me ? Ask them who heard me, what I have said unto them : behold, they know what I have said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers, who stood by, struck Jesus, a blow on the face, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so ? Jesus answereth him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : but if well, why smitest thou me ?

Now the chief priests and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death, but found none, though many false witnesses came; but their testimonies did not agree together. At the last came two false witnesses, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days: I will destroy this temple that is made with hands; and, within three days, I will build another that is made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing to what these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing.

XIII. Again the high priest questioned him, and said unto him, I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the blessed God? And Jesus said, I am: and hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all said, He is guilty of death.

XIV. Then did they spit in his face; and they

blindfolded him, and struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against him.

XV. Now Peter followed Jesus afar off that he might see the end; and another disciple followed him also: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple who was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And Peter went into the court of the high priest, and sat with the servants. For the officers and servants had kindled a fire of coals in the midst of the court, for it was cold, and were set down together to warm themselves; and Peter sat down among them, and warmed himself. And the maid that kept the door, beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth: then she saith to Peter, Thou also wert with Jesus of Nazareth: art not thou one of this man's disciples? And he denied before them all, saying, Woman, I know him not; neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said

unto them that were there, This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And Peter stood and warmed himself. And after a little while, another saw him and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And about the space of one hour after, one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman, whose ear Peter cut off, confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean. And he saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? And they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrayeth thee. Peter then denied again, and he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew a second time.

XVI. And the Lord turned, and looked on Peter: And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, who said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

XVII. As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests and the scribes, took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they led him into their council, saying, Art thou

the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also should question you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. But hereafter shall the Son of Man sit at the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he answered them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard it of his own mouth.

XVIII. And the whole multitude of them arose, and when they had bound him, they led him away from Caiphas to the hall of judgment, and delivered him up to Pontius Pilate, the Governor.

XIX. Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself; and he brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said to him, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed. And he went and hanged himself, and he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the Potter's Field, to bury

strangers in. Wherefore that field was called The Field of Blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord appointed me.

XX. Then led they Jesus from Caiphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early: and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and he said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews answered him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this man perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King.

XXI. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus. And Jesus stood

before the governor. And he asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again, and said to the chief priests, and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

XXII. And when Jesus was accused by the chief priests and the elders of many things, he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

XXIII. But the chief priests were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching

throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his army set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a white robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

XXIV. But Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in him touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. Now, at that feast, the governor

was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas, who was a robber, and was cast into prison for a certain sedition made in the city, and who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? I find in him no fault at all; but ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him up for envy. But when he was set down in the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. Now the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

XXV. And the Governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the two will ye that I release unto you? And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, said again unto them, What will ye then

that I shall do unto the King of the Jews, who is called Christ? They all say unto him a second time, Let him be crucified. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, crying, Crucify him, crucify him. And the voices of them and the chief priests prevailed.

XXVI. And when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Pilate therefore, willing to content the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required: and he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

XXVII. Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him.

XXVIII. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band, and they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon

his head, and a reed in his right hand ; and they bowed the knee before him ; and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! And they took the reed and smote him on the head, and spit upon him, and bowing their knees, worshipped him.

XXIX. Pilate then went forth again to the people, and said unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man. When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him and crucify him : for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

XXX. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me ? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ? Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore, he that delivered me unto thee

hath the greater sin. From thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a King, speaketh against Cæsar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, in a place which is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gab-batha. And it was the preparation of the Pas-sover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no King but Cæsar. Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified.

XXXI. And they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And he went forth, bearing his cross. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus; him they compelled to bear his cross, and on him they laid it that he might bear it after Jesus.

XXXII. And there followed him a great com-pany of people and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus, turning unto them,

said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me but weep for yourselves and for your children For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?

XXXIII. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is interpreted Calvary (or the place of sculls). And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh and gall ; and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And there were also two others, who were thieves, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the two thieves, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And Jesus was in the midst. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, He was numbered with the wicked. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

XXXIV. And Pilate wrote a title, and set up on the cross over his head his accusation written, and the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. And many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was

nigh to the city ; and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, the King of the Jews; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be : That the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they cast lots. And sitting down, they watched him. And they that passed by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, Ah ! Thou that destroyest the temple of God and buildest it again in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests with the scribes and elders, mocking him, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of God. And one of the malefactors who were hanging railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

XXXV. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? We indeed suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

XXXVI. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

XXXVII. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood by, when they heard that, said, Behold, he calleth for Elias. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of

vinegar ; and straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar ; and putting it on a reed with hyssop round it, they gave him to drink. Others said, Stay ; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

XXXVIII. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished ; And he cried again with a loud voice, and said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

XXXIX. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. And when the centurion who stood over against him, saw that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And when they that were watching Jesus with him saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, returned, smiting their breasts. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things—

among whom were Mary Magdalen, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joseph, and Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children, who also when he was in Galilee followed him and ministered unto him, and many other women who came up with him unto Jerusalem.

XL. The Jews therefore because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the sabbath day, (for that was a great sabbath day) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs : But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

FIRST MEDITATION.

**JESUS GOES TO THE GARDEN OF OLIVES,
AND BY HIS PREDICTIONS PUTS HIS
APOSTLES ON THEIR GUARD AGAINST
THE SCANDAL OF HIS PASSION.
MATT. XXVI. 30—35. MARK XIV. 26—
31. LUKE XXII. 31—34.**

FIRST POINT.

THIS Meditation is a preparation for the subsequent Meditations on the Passion. The humiliations which Jesus Christ submitted to are so excessive, that even we, who are Christians, ought not to meditate on them, without being first confirmed in the faith of his divinity; without this there might be danger lest they should occasion some degree of scandal, by giving us with respect to Jesus Christ an idea of meanness, of weakness, of want of power; whereas, in this very state of humiliation, we

ought to consider him as the power and the wisdom of God. For this we are admirably prepared by the discourse which he had with his apostles before he arrived at the first stage of his sufferings and humiliation.

I. *Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be scandalized because of me this night.*—That is to say, You will give way to alarm, mistrust, and infidelity ; you will not know what you ought to think of me ; and all that I have told you of my Father, of my kingdom, of the places I have there reserved for you, will be effaced from your minds by the terror you will experience when you see to what a state I shall be brought. At that moment nothing was farther from the apostles' thoughts than such perfidiousness ; yet the time was not far distant, and Jesus must have known what was to come as perfectly as what was present, to be able to speak in this manner.

II. *For it is written; I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed.*—Are not Jesus Christ and his apostles here clearly pointed out ? The prophecies, often reported by our Lord himself, and so faithfully accom-

plished in himself and his people, were afterwards for the apostles, and will be for ever for the faithful a great subject of comfort, and a solid foundation of the Christian faith against Jews and infidels. Only a God could predict so long before, and by so many different mouths, the various events which are all united and accomplished in the adorable promise of our divine Redeemer. This is a reflection we cannot make too frequently.

III. *But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*—This saying was remarkable, and should have made an indelible impression on the hearts of the apostles. But if they forgot this like all the rest, it served at least in its proper time to recover them from their excessive terror, and to bring back their faith. Galilee was their own country; it was there that Jesus had assembled them together, it was from thence he had led them to Jerusalem, and they followed him in this last journey with extreme reluctance, from the fear they had of meeting there with an untimely end. What must they have thought when they saw their master seized and put to death! They then, no doubt, gave themselves up for lost,

without hope of getting away from Judea, or of ever seeing Galilee, their beloved country again. This name Galilee, which must have often occurred to their minds, was employed on purpose by Jesus Christ to bring back his promise to their recollection. What attention, what goodness and mercy on the part of our Saviour, but at the same time what greatness and power !

SECOND POINT.

I. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.—It is thus that Satan asked of God to have holy Job, who in his sorrows and the long series of happiness that followed them, was the figure of Jesus suffering, dying, and rising again. Job was ignorant of the power Satan had obtained over him, but the Son of God was not ignorant of any of the proceedings of this spirit of darkness, nor of any permission that had been granted him. He knew that one of his disciples had already given him possession of his heart: he knew the extent of the power he was about to exercise over the Shepherd and over the sheep: and the de-

claration which Jesus Christ here makes to St. Peter, shews that nothing was hidden from him either in heaven or in earth, or in times past, present, or to come. After having convinced ourselves of this truth, and done homage to the divinity of our Saviour, let us next admire how our enemy the devil can do nothing of himself against the servants of God; that when it is question of an extraordinary trial, he must obtain an express permission for it, and that this permission is never unlimited, but restricted by God to what suits his own designs and our sanctification; for though on the present occasion Satan could carry his rage so far as to accomplish the death of Jesus Christ, he obtained no power over the apostles but that of putting them in trouble, of dispersing them, of agitating them as wheat is agitated in the sieve. In fine, let us be sensible that as long as we are faithful and have recourse to prayer, all the efforts of the devil have no other effect upon us than that which the shaking of the sieve produces on the wheat, which is, to disengage it from every thing which rendered it less pure.

II. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art con-

verted, strengthen thy brethren.—Powerful prayer, which prevailed over all the demands of Satan! Efficacious prayer and command, the effect of which endures down to our days, and will endure to the end of the world! Never hath the faith of Peter failed: his see will subsist till the end of ages, and will be always the centre of unity and the oracle of truth. He who shall be seated there, will have always, in virtue of this command and by divine right, pre-eminence and primacy over all other sees, and jurisdiction over the universal church! He will have to watch over the whole flock, there to maintain unity of faith, purity of morals, uniformity of discipline. Jesus teaches us to whom we are indebted for it. But who is he that thus speaks to us on the verge of death, and whose words are all verified, against all human expectation, during the series of so many ages? Who is it but the only Son of the living God, the master of hearts, and the supreme ruler of times and seasons?

III. *Peter answered and said unto him, Though all shall be scandalized because of thee, yet will I never be scandalized. Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death.*—Jesus

had already made known to Peter that his fall was at hand ; he here assures him of his conversion, and that his fall will not cause him to lose any thing of his privileges. Peter should have been satisfied with this assurance ; but feeling at this moment full of zeal and courage, he believed himself for ever incapable of any weakness. He dared even to prefer himself to all the rest ; and, in punishment his fall was more humiliating than theirs. Ah ! how much ought we to distrust ourselves ! We have no security but in the divine assistance, which we should implore without ceasing. Jesus answered him, *Peter, I tell thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.* We know how this prediction was accomplished, but we cannot enough consider how much it is admirable and divine. On one side, Peter professing an inviolable attachment to Jesus ; on the other, Jesus assuring him, that before this very night shall be fully passed, Peter shall have denied him three times. Never was there a prediction more positive, more precise, delivered in clearer terms, of an event near at hand, yet seeming unlikely to happen, and depending on trifling circumstances, which only

the discernment of a God could unravel and foresee.

THIRD POINT.

But he spake the more vehemently : If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner said all the disciples.

I. The apostles undertake what is not required of them. They grossly deceived themselves as to the nature of their duties on this occasion. It was not questioned of their going to prison with Jesus, of defending him or dying with him. Jesus only was the Lamb of God, and the great victim which was to be immolated to the divine Justice for the salvation of all mankind. Jesus had often told them that he was to die, and rise again on the third day; but they never would understand these words nor inquire the meaning of them. If they had understood them, they would have asked Jesus what it was proper for them to do during that time; or they would have learnt from the events which happened how to conduct themselves, viz. to watch and pray in the Garden of Olives; to withdraw when Jesus gave them to understand that he was about

to surrender himself to his enemies ; to preserve, in the midst of the storm, a lively faith in him, and a firm hope of seeing him again alive on the third day ; and not to consider his death as the ruin of his kingdom and of their hopes, but as the consummation of the work he had undertaken, and the accomplishment of all his designs.

II. Mary was for the apostles a model which they ought to have followed. Mary, mother of Jesus, understood him much better. She had treasured up all the words of her son, and all that the angels and men inspired by God had said of him. She meditated in her heart the divine oracles, she compared them together, and thence drew the heavenly light which directed all her steps. It is true she was seen on Mount Calvary sharing with her son the chalice of his passion ; but she was not seen to disquiet herself, or take any pains for his deliverance : she was not seen to prepare perfumes, and go on the third day to seek among the dead him who had said that he should then be in the number of the living. The apostles were very far from understanding the words of Christ with the same simplicity, and receiving them with the same attention and do-

cility as Mary. They intermixed their own ideas with them, and interpreted them according to their own prejudices, and hence they often fell into mistakes.

III. The apostles were wanting in what was most expressly recommended to them, which was, to maintain peace, faith, and hope in their hearts. This is what our Lord had just foretold them, that they would be scandalized in him; it is of this he complained, when he reproached them that they would forsake him, not only in body, which he did not object to, but in their hearts, by falling into dismay and perplexity, and by giving way so much to alarm as to forget all that he had told them during his life, and even this very night.

O my God! I imitate but too well the apostles in the manner in which I often understand thy divine word; so do I occasionally find myself as weak as them! O Mary, obtain for me grace to imitate thy docility, that I may one day have a share in thy happiness! Amen.

SECOND MEDITATION.

ON THE TWO SWORDS. LUKE XXII.
34—38.

FIRT POINT.

I. *And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.*—Why did our Lord put this question to them? The apostles had just renewed the protestations of fidelity which they had already made to him. Jesus saw their present sincerity; but he saw also their future infidelity and their approaching inconstancy. It was his wish that, after the event, they might be sensible, when they called to mind his words, that he had foreseen every thing; that, if he had appeared before their eyes in a state of weakness and humiliation, he was not the less the power of God and

the splendour of his glory; that, as he had provided that they should want for nothing, at a time when he sent them forth destitute of every thing, so when he should himself appear destitute of all succour, and even deprived of life—he was not less the Son of God, clothed with the Almighty power which his Father had given him, and able to fulfil all the promises he had made to them. Such are the ideas which we ought to entertain of him, and which we ought never to lose sight of during the whole course of his Passion.

II. Let us imagine that our Lord puts this question to ourselves. When He has sent us—when we acted from obedience—when we have been attentive to his voice, and exact in walking in the way of his holy commandments, have we wanted for any thing? Have we not tasted true peace of heart and delightful interior joy? Let us call to mind, with gratitude, the particular favours we have received, and the abundance of good things we have enjoyed.—So much for time past. Now let us, with grief and confusion, consider the present time. Oh! why do we forsake so good a God? Why do we serve him

with so much sluggishness—with so much backwardness and tepidity? Finally, let us rouse ourselves for the time to come, and place all our confidence in the goodness and power of our God. Let us often put to ourselves the question which our Lord here puts to his apostles: Have we hitherto wanted for any thing? Has not Providence supplied all our wants? Let us then hope that it will supply them still; and let us never give way to distrust. Nay, though the Lord should be pleased to try me so far, as to suffer me to be put to death like his Son, I would say with Job, that *still in him would I hope.*

SECOND POINT.

I. Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me. And he was reckoned among the wicked. —A circumstance, of which our Lord had not yet spoken, is here foretold; to wit, that he would be crucified between two thieves. For St. Mark, in relating that event, observes, that this

prophecy was then accomplished. Our Lord also makes us observe here, that this circumstance had already been foretold by the prophet.

II. *For the things concerning me have an end.*—Soon you will see all these things accomplished. Who but a God could speak in this manner? What a high idea ought we not to form of our Saviour, when we see him enter thus upon the career of his sufferings! By these words he gives us to understand, that he is the object of all the prophecies, and that they all were accomplished in him; that he is himself the God of the prophets—that he knows what they have said—that he is Master of the time when all was to be accomplished, and that the order and manner of it is regulated by him.

THIRD POINT.

I. *And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords.*—The apostles, as usual, fall here into a mistake: they paid no attention to the predictions made by Jesus, nor to the prophecies which he cited. Their minds were taken up with the sword he had spoken of; and, not understanding what our Lord had

said to them under these figurative expressions, they took his words literally, and believed that he ordered them to arm themselves in his defence. Nothing was more opposite to their divine Master's thoughts ; and we should deceive ourselves, like them, if we imagined that the Saviour of the world ever put a material sword into the hands of his disciples for the defence of his cause. If Jesus Christ, on this occasion, leaves them in their error, the reason is, that the time was short, and that they would soon be undeceived by the event. It happens but too often to ourselves thus to fall into mistakes, when we read or hear the word of God. We mind only that which is conformable to our prejudices and inclinations : we explain it in our own way, and we forget all the rest.

II. And he said unto them, It is enough.—This word, *it is enough*, does not apply to the swords of which the apostles were speaking ; but to the instructions which Jesus had just given them, and the predictions he had made to them. *It is enough*—I have said enough to prepare you for the strange spectacle you are about to witness; enough, to convince you of the certain knowledge I have of futurity ; enough,

to strengthen you in the fidelity you owe me; finally, enough to bring you back to me—to make you believe in me, when you shall have seen me risen from the dead. Then, you will comprehend the meaning of the words I have said to you, and which you now understand so little. The time drew near—Jesus says nothing more to them. He does not reproach them with their want of intelligence. He lets them follow their own ideas with regard to the two swords, which were soon to afford him matter for a lesson—for an act of clemency—and for a miracle. He hastens to accomplish the work of our redemption, after having giving cautions to his apostles, which they were not disposed to profit by; but which, when recollected by them afterwards, would fill them with admiration and love for the great and kind Master who had given them. Let us be mindful of them ourselves; and, whilst we meditate on the excess of his sufferings and humiliations, let us not forget his greatness and his power, of which he will afford us so many proofs, even during the course of his Passion.

Yes, O Lord! even when hanging on a disgraceful cross, thou art not the less

great, nor the less powerful: thou art every where the same—every where omnipotent and divine! In every place, and in every situation, I will also have the same confidence in thee, and the same submission to thy holy will. Give me strength, O my God! to fulfil this promise. Amen.

THIRD MEDITATION.

ON THE SORROW OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN. MATT. XXVI. 36—38. MARK XIV. 32—34. LUKE XXII. 39, 40. JOHN XVIII. 1, 2.

FIRST POINT.

I. Jesus, having said these things, went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron to the mountain of Olives; and his disciples followed him. Then he came to a place called Gethsemani, where there was a garden, into which he entered with his disciples. And he said to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray; pray ye also, that ye may not enter into temptation.—Jesus has already advertised us, that his life and death depended upon himself—that no one had power to take away his life—that he was master to lay it down and resume it.

it again, as he pleased. What Jesus says of his death must be understood of all that he suffered, and of every circumstance of his Passion. This truth, which we should never lose sight of, ought wonderfully to increase our respect and our love. Let us reflect, then, at every particular torment which we meditate upon, that Jesus suffered it by his own free will.—And, to begin with this first suffering which our Saviour endured in the garden : It appears, by all that he said, that this sorrow took possession of his soul only when he was pleased to permit it. What a calm reigns throughout his whole discourse at the last supper!—every word of it breathes comfort, confidence, and courage. Such as he appeared in the dining room, so does he appear at the entrance of the garden : he speaks there with his usual tranquillity and meekness. Ah ! if, a moment afterwards, he is overwhelmed with sorrow, it is only because he wills it : and he wills it for the love of us.

II. And he took with him Peter, James, and John.—Jesus makes his arrangements with the same calmness with which he speaks. He leaves eight of his disciples at the entrance of the

garden ; and he takes three along with him a little farther on, that they only might be witnesses of his first sufferings, and privy to the interior anguish of his soul.

III. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often resorted thither with his disciples.— Judas knew the place—and Jesus knew that he would make use of this knowledge to deliver him up to his enemies : nevertheless, Jesus repairs thither, because it is his will to be delivered up. The treason of Judas, and of such as shall imitate him, is about to be one of the causes of the sorrow of Jesus ; nevertheless, Jesus repairs to the place where the treason is to be consummated—because he consents to be betrayed, and to suffer the sorrow which this treason will bring upon him.

I thank thee, O my Redeemer ! for the infinite charity with which thou hast freely and voluntarily delivered thyself up to suffer for my love ! This liberty was suitable to the dignity of thy person : it has not been granted to me ; but, without it, I am enabled to please thee, and to merit thy favour. I am condemned to suffer, and to die, by a supreme and irrevocable decree.

If sufferings and death were left to my own choice, I should not be generous enough to embrace them for the love of thee; but at least, since it is indispensably necessary that I should undergo sufferings and death, grant me fidelity and gratitude enough to suffer and die only for thee—only to unite myself to thee—only to imitate and please thee!

SECOND POINT.

I. Then he began to fear and to be sad.

—Hitherto Jesus had arranged every thing with the greatest calmness: he had spoken of his Passion with as much serenity as if he were foretelling evils in which he had no concern; or rather, he had spoken of his sufferings as if they were to be the source of his happiness, and the only object of all his desire; but, as soon as he finds himself alone with his three chosen disciples, fear, weariness, disgust, dejection, seize all at once upon his soul. He, who inspired strength and courage, seems to be weakness itself.

II. And he said to them, My soul is sorrowful, even unto death: stay here, and watch with me.—Jesus did not exaggerate his ills. How excessive

must have been his sorrow to reduce him to such a state! Ah! if we sometimes experience sentiments of weariness and sorrow, let us bear it with resignation; let us unite ourselves to Jesus, overwhelmed with sorrow and weariness; and let us reflect, that our grief is infinitely less than that which he has endured for us. If ours be excessive, let us thence judge how great our Saviour's must have been, since it alone was capable of occasioning his death, if he had not reserved himself for other sufferings.

III. This sorrow is astonishing, because it seems incompatible with the dignity of his person. To suffer with courage, to die heroically, commands our admiration: but to tremble, to be alarmed at the sight of death, to give way to grief and sadness, to be ready to die with weariness, dejection, and disgust—is reputed the excess of weakness—is looked upon as most humbling in the eyes of the world.

Well didst thou warn thy disciples, O Lord! not to be scandalized: what scandal would they not have taken, had they witnessed this first scene of thy Passion! Those whom thou madest choice of on this occasion to be privy

to thy troubles, are the same who were the first witnesses of thy power over death in the house of Jairus—the only witnesses of thy glory on Mount Thabor. Far then from being scandalized, I discover, in the sudden change which takes place in thee, thy absolute empire over thyself—over thy body and thy life—over thy soul and its affections. By these different interior emotions to which thou art subjected, I discover that thou hast taken upon thyself my very nature—a humanity, in every thing but sin, like unto mine; not excepting the weaknesses and infirmities as well of the body as of the soul. But in the excess with which thou givest way to these motions of nature, what can I see else than the excess of thy love for me !

THIRD POINT.

I. This sorrow of Jesus was holy in its principle, which was—the love of God—obedience to his commands—and, the desire of retrieving his glory, by immolating himself, as a perfect holocaust, to his justice. As every part of his body was to be afflicted, and all his blood was to be spilled, so was his soul to be tormented in all its pow-

ers ; and it is by this, as the most noble portion of his humanity, that he was pleased to begin his sacrifice. The first torment was doubtless the most violent of his Passion ; and it is by this also that we must begin to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, in order to satisfy the justice of God, when we return to him by repentance.

II. It was holy in its object—being on one hand his own torments, which he represented to himself with all their circumstances ; on the other, the misery of the Jews, who, by putting him to death, were about to draw upon themselves all the severity of God's vengeance, and the misery of sinners ; who, by their abuse of his gifts, were about to render themselves more guilty, and many of whom, in spite of his sufferings, would be eternally lost : finally, the offence of God, which would be so much the more aggravated in proportion as his love should be more slighted. Alas ! O Lord, how great a share had I in thy sorrow ! What impression must not my sins, my relapses, my infidelities, my tepidity have made upon thy sacred heart ! Wretch that I am ! shall I never be to thee a subject of consolation and joy ? Ah ! how dif-

ferent is the object of my pains in the world to that which causes thine !

III. It was holy in its end—which was our sanctification. Jesus was pleased to suffer in his soul this excess of sorrow, to expiate the sins which we have committed in this portion of ourselves, and upon which we do not reflect enough ; to expiate the senseless indifference of our first parent, in preferring the decree of death to the obedience he owed to God ; to expiate the frantic security with which infidels brave death, and in which so many sinners live upon earth without fear of being taken by surprise, or punished by death ; to expiate those joys, those pleasures, that desire of life, those hopes to which we yield up our hearts, contrary to the law of God, and without fear of his chastisements : to expiate our false contritions, our pretended conversions, without interior repentance, without sorrow for having offended God. Jesus was pleased to undergo, in his own person, sorrow, fear, dejection, disgust, to sanctify in us these affections of the soul—to console us under them—to merit for us grace to bear them by his example—to moderate them within us—and often even to exempt

us from them. It is in virtue of this divine sorrow, that the martyrs flew so boldly to torments and death—that so many fervent Christians have beheld the approaches of death with tranquillity and confidence, and even with joy; and that so many others find a sensible joy and delight in the exercises of piety and charity, of zeal and of penance.

O Jesus, how amiable art thou in thy sorrow! how great in thy infirmity! how strong in thy weakness! how powerful in thy fear! how consoling in thy dejection! I thank thee for having thus abased thyself for my sake. To thee I owe all the consolation, all the peace which I enjoy. If then I am afflicted, terrified, cast down—I will unite myself to thee; I will remember that thou hast suffered all this for me, and that what I suffer is nothing in comparison of what thou hast chosen for thyself. Amen.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN. MATT. XXVI. 39—44. MARK XIV. 35—40. LUKE XXII. 41, 42.

FIRST POINT.

I. And he went forward a little, about a stone's cast from them, and knelt down, and falling upon his face, he prayed.— When we have occasion to pray out of the usual place of prayer, respect requires that we should retire in private to pray with greater recollection and attention. Our Lord, though he withdrew from his three disciples, was pleased nevertheless to remain within sight of them, to set them an example. Let us contemplate ourselves this divine model, let us behold Jesus first kneeling down in the presence of God his Father, then prostrating himself on the ground before this infinite Majesty. Is it with this re-

spect we pray to God? We say, to excuse ourselves, that we are not masters of our minds, of our imagination; but our body we are masters of; how do we dispose of that in prayer? Are we ignorant how much the body influences the soul, how much an humble and respectful posture contributes to impress the mind, the imagination, and all the powers of the soul with respect?

II. And he said, Father, if it be possible, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.—That is to say, Father, if it be possible, if there be any other means of accomplishing thy designs, remove from me this dreadful chalice of a cruel and ignominious death; nevertheless listen to my prayer only as far as it is conformable to thy will. See the submission of my heart, and reject, if necessary, what my trembling and terrified nature asks. Let us admire in this prayer the respect, the ardent love, the confidence, and above all, the perfect submission and entire resignation of Jesus. Whatever we ask for, whatever interest we take in the success of our petition, let us always add to our prayer these essential words: *Not my will, but thine be done.*

III. *And he cometh to his disciples and findeth them sleeping, and he saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou! Couldst not thou watch one hour with me?*—Then addressing himself to all the three, *Watch ye, said he to them, and pray lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.*—These words contain, 1st. a reproach which we have often deserved. We readily watch with the world, but we cannot watch with Jesus. 2d. A command which we have often neglected. We must watch over our hearts that we may perceive the beginning of a temptation, and we must pray to obtain grace to resist this beginning. Then the victory is not difficult; but if, for want of watchfulness and prayer, we *enter into temptation*, if we give ear to the first thoughts, the first impulses, the first sentiments, in a short time we go great lengths. 3d. A maxim we have often forgotten, and the forgetting of which has more than once occasioned our ruin. We depend upon our good resolutions, thinking ourselves firm and not to be shaken; we rashly expose ourselves to danger, and we then find by experience how truly the flesh is weak, and how easily the spirit is hurried away by the

flesh. 4th. The example of an admirable charity and meekness which we little imitate. Jesus was overwhelmed with weariness and sorrow. He had disclosed it to his disciples that they might take part in it, he had recommended to them to watch and pray with him, and he finds them buried in sleep, forgetful of his situation and of the orders he had given them. Observe nevertheless how meekly he speaks to them. It is not so with us; if we meet with the smallest vexation, we make every one around us feel it by our harsh and unkind deportment, and though we be just come from our prayers or exercises of devotion, this does not soften the peevishness of our temper, or the asperity of our language.

SECOND POINT.

I. And again he went away and prayed, and spake the same words—making the same request to God his Father with the same respect, the same ardour, the same confidence. Alas! how short-lived is our fervour! Every day at our prayers we repeat the same words; but if it happen that one day we say them with respect, the next day sees our fervour

decrease, and we are constant in nothing but our inattentions and the distractions of our mind.

II. Saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.—When we repeat our petitions in hopes to touch the heart of God, and to be heard by him, what we should insist upon most, and repeat the most forcibly is our perfect submission, and renouncing of our own will, to conform ourselves entirely to the holy will of God.

III. And when he returned (to his apostles) he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy) neither knew they what to answer him.—But Jesus relieved them from their embarrassment. Satisfied with the confusion they shewed, he had compassion on their weakness, and said nothing to them. Since the Supper, they had taken no rest, their minds had been always on the stretch by the attention they had given to the sublime discourses of our Lord, and their hearts oppressed by his predictions, which foretold nothing but treason, desertion, renouncing, and scandal. It was not then surprising that, the night being already far advanced, their eyes should be weighed down with sleep. Let us

here make two reflections : the first, that when we are drowsy and indolent in prayer, we are far from being as excusable as the apostles ; the second, that when our neighbour falls again into faults for which we have before reproved him, we are far from imitating the meekness of Jesus Christ.

THIRD POINT.

And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.—The example of our Lord here teaches us three things.

I. Perseverance in prayer. Jesus Christ dedicated to prayer all the time which remained from his discourse after the Supper till the arrival of Judas, and he interrupted it only to rouse the vigilance of his disciples, and to encourage them to imitate him. Alas ! how ill did they imitate him ! But how ill do we imitate him ourselves ! How much time have we on our hands which we might employ in prayer ! How often do we interrupt our prayers, and omit those we are obliged, or have made a resolution to recite.

II. Fewness of words in prayer. In this long prayer which our Lord said at

three different times, we see but few words, but a great deal of humility, of self-denial, of respect, of resignation. In our prayers on the contrary we employ many words, but little attention, little sentiment, little of the language of the heart, which is the essence of prayer.

III. Repetition of the same prayer.
In order to discourse a long time with God, to discourse with him every day and at all hours of the day, we have no need to study our words and to vary our expressions. A word that expresses our submission, our confidence, and our love, may suffice; before God we may repeat it without ceasing. Men might take offence at being so addressed, but our Creator holds himself honoured by it. What condescension, in order to render easy to us the practice of prayer! Shall we never profit of it?

Give me, O my God, this spirit of fervent prayer, that being continually in thy presence, and in the holy dispositions of thy only Son, I may deserve that thou shouldst become my consolation in all my evils, and my strength in all dangers. Amen.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

ON THE EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH OCCURRED DURING THE PRAYER OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN.
LUKE xxii. 43, 44.

FIRST POINT.

And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.—I. It was whilst Jesus was praying for the third time, that this angel appeared to him, and that all the rest happened which is here related by St. Luke. That an angel should appear to Jesus is nothing surprising; he is the Lord of angels, and it is the function of these blessed spirits to wait upon him: but what is truly astonishing is, that this angel should have appeared to him to strengthen him. Is not Jesus Christ strength itself, the strength of God, that strength which bears and supports all

things, and consequently is it not he who strengthens angels and men? How then could he be strengthened by an angel? Ah! It was out of love and condescension for us! As he was pleased during his infancy, in the weakness of his body, to receive from the hands of men the assistance which other children receive from them, so was he pleased, in the dejection of his soul, to receive at the hand of angels those succours which other men may expect from them. All this is a consequence of his vouchsafing to subject himself to the infirmities of our nature, which ought to make him infinitely dear to us. Of what nature was the assistance given him by the angel? This is a mystery which the Gospel has not explained to us, and which is doubtless above our thoughts. We can here only admire and adore in silence.

II. In Jesus waited upon by angels we behold a Master; but in Jesus strengthened by an angel we behold our Saviour and our head; and we have a right, as his members, to hope for the same succours. God has appointed his angels to be in our regard the ministers of his goodness and mercies. Let us invoke them in our necessities, let us

place our confidence in them, and their visible help will not be wanting to us. How many graces, how many good thoughts and courageous sentiments have we not been favoured with by their ministry, and how many more may we not expect, if, through the merits of our Saviour and in union with him, we pray to them with confidence !

III. Let us learn here that the great remedy of all our evils is prayer ; that by praying and persevering in prayer we shall obtain from God consolation, strength, and courage, which we should look for in vain from men ; let us learn also that God does not always hear our prayers by delivering us from our evils, but by giving us strength to bear them, which is much more to our advantage, and to that of our eternal interests,

SECOND POINT,

I. *And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly.*—This agony was a kind of conflict in the soul of Jesus. The greatness of the torment he endured cannot be expressed ; and, without a miracle, he would doubtless have sunk under it. During this long torture, Jesus never ceased praying for the per-

fect accomplishment of his Father's will. It must be observed, that, by an incomprehensible prodigy, neither the mortal sadness of our Lord, nor his agony, nor all his torments, ever interrupted his intuitive vision of God, and the essential beatitude of his soul ; and that this essential beatitude, on the other hand, did not diminish his natural sensibility, or the acuteness of his torments. Let us compassionate his sufferings, without forgetting that he who suffers is a God ; and that, though he be a God, he nevertheless suffers the most cruel torments.

II. The sight of death was not the only, nor the principal cause of his agony : it must rather be attributed to the sight of our sins. Jesus saw the whole detail of the torments and ignominies he was about to suffer ; but he saw not less distinctly the detail of all the crimes which he had taken upon himself, and which he was about to expiate. He saw that this super-abundant expiation would augment the malice of the sins of many ; and that for many, it would be of no avail. Alas ! how many sins, O my Saviour, didst thou not see in me ! How much have not I contributed to the excess of thy agony !

III. Why was our Saviour pleased to suffer this agony? It was because he would not exempt himself from any thing which we are to suffer; and, as his death was to be the model, the comfort, and the support of ours, he was pleased also that his agony should animate and strengthen us in ours, to enable us to persevere unto the end. It was not fit that he should suffer this agony on the cross, where he was to display a more than mortal fortitude, and where even his last breath was to be a proof of his divinity. On this account, he anticipated the time of his agony, and was pleased to suffer it before his other torments, that he might not leave us without comfort, in so critical a moment, for our salvation. O Saviour of our souls, what thanksgivings can we offer thee for so great a charity!

THIRD POINT.

I. *And his sweat was as drops of blood falling down to the ground.*—From such an extraordinary sweat we may judge how violent was the conflict which Jesus underwent—how great were his interior sufferings—and to what a state he was reduced.

II. This sweat of blood encourages us to do penance. It is thus, O great God ! that thou hast found means to reconcile thy justice and thy mercy. What remains for me to do to escape thy anger, but to put off the sinful man, in order to put on thee, O suffering and penitent Jesus! Ah! how trifling is the penance I perform ! I complain of its rigours, and I have not yet resisted unto blood.

O Jesus, put to death in me the old man ; draw from my eyes those tears of repentance, which are, as it were, the blood of a penitent heart. Apply to me the merit of thy blessed agony. Mine will one day come ; when Nature, struggling in vain against death, my soul will have to fight its last conflict against the attacks of the enemy of my salvation. Ah ! from this moment, O Lord, I accept this agony ; I submit to all its rigours ; I unite it to thine, and beseech thee, by the merits of thine, to support me in this last hour. Grant me grace, while any glimpse of intellect shall then remain, to employ it, like thee, in prayer, and wholly to resign myself to the will of my Father and my Creator. Angel of heaven, my faithful guardian !—ye, my holy patrons! whom

I daily invoke ;—and you, above all,
Queen of angels and saints ! strengthen
me in this last conflict, that I may come
off victorious ; and that, having perse-
vered to the end in the exercise of faith,
hope, and charity, I may enter with
you into the kingdom which my Saviour
has promised me, and merited for me—
a kingdom which will have no end!
Amen.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

ON JESUS, AFTER HIS PRAYER IN THE
GARDEN. MATT. XXVI. 45, 46. MARK
xiv. 41, 42. LUKE XXII. 45—56.

FIRST POINT.

I. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow; and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Then he said to them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come: behold, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up; let us go: lo, he that will betray me is at hand.—Jesus, going for the third time to his disciples, meekly says to them, Why sleep ye? He does not say to them, What! you are still asleep, although I have admonished you twice

already! I come now to you a third time, and, in spite of my repeated admonitions, I find you still guilty of the same fault! What do we not say on such occasions? Our eloquence is inexhaustible.

II. Our Lord had begun by telling them to pray, lest they should enter into temptation; and he ends in the same manner. This may be said to be the last instructions which he gave to his apostles before his death, which shews how great is its importance.

III. Let us apply this reproach of our blessed Saviour to ourselves. What! says Jesus Christ to us, you still sleep in the sleep of sin—in the sleep of tepidity, of sloth, of dissipation! You have so often been awoke, and behold, you are again relapsed into your lethargy! Do not you perceive that your life is but a dream—that the riches and pleasures to which you are attached have as little reality, as little stability, as those which we enjoy in the illusion of an agreeable slumber—that they will be snatched from you at your awaking, and will leave you in the utmost misery? Well, *sleep then now, and take your rest!* Is not this the proper time for sleep? You are now about to end the career

of your mortal life : the world will soon be nothing to you ; and I am about to inquire of you, what use you have made of your life ? Sleep, then ; give yourself up to repose—such only to establish your resting-place here below, and to lead here a life of indolence and pleasures. Ah ! rather begin to be wise : *it is enough* : you have slept enough ; you have wasted but too much time in a criminal and dangerous sleep. Rouse yourself at length : blush at your sloth. *Arise*, without delay, and *pray* : do you wish to be taken by surprise ? Ah ! enter now upon a Christian life—a life of prayer, of fervour, and of penance.

SECOND POINT.

I. *The hour is come : behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*—Jesus went not forth to the combat till after his prayer. It was there he gained that courage, that intrepidity which he displayed. Is it then wonderful that we should be without courage, when we do not prepare ourselves by prayer ? And let us not imagine that we have made a good prayer, if we find ourselves without

courage after it, as backward at doing good, as averse to mortification, as negligent of our duties as we were before.

2. *The hour is come* :—This hour, so desired, so dreaded, is the hour of God. Though desired, it is not anticipated; and, though dreaded, it is not avoided. It is the hour of torment, of ignominy, and of death; but it is God's hour, and it is come. *Rise up; let us go.*—Alas! is it thus that *we* obey? Our obedience, nevertheless, is not put to such a trial; yet for the little which God requires of us, we abandon our Saviour, instead of uniting ourselves to him. Jesus fears and trembles during his prayer, and is intrepid when he comes to action. We, on the contrary, are full of courage in making resolutions, but have none left when it is question of carrying them into execution.

THIRD POINT.

He that will betray me is at hand.—When Judas left the dining room to consummate his treason, Jesus saw all the measures that were going to be taken: but, moreover, he knew the

time the chief priests would require to assemble a body of men, to give them instructions, and to set them to work. Jesus followed in mind all their steps; and, by the certain knowledge which he had of them, regulated his own. He took his own time in the dining room, to make his last farewell to the apostles, and to give them his last instructions: in like manner, he took the time he judged suitable for his prayer in the garden. Having afterwards, with his three disciples, rejoined the other eight, he announced to them with certainty the arrival of Judas and his satellites. It is thus that Jesus is careful to strengthen our faith against the scandal of his humiliations, that so we may never forget, that, if it be a man like us who suffers, it is, at the same time, a Man-god, who suffers only by his own free will and for our salvation. Infidels give credit to the evangelists, when they relate the humiliations of our blessed Saviour, but believe them no longer when they attest the proofs of his divinity; because, if they acknowledge him to be God, they feel that his humiliations and sufferings enjoin duties of humility and mortification which they are unwilling to comply with. For us, who seek only

the way of salvation, it is a pleasure to see it securely pointed out by Him who has proved, in so many ways and unto the end, that he was the Son of God sent from heaven to teach us,

With this faith, and in this spirit, will I follow thee, O Jesus, in the whole course of thy Passion, as my divine model, my Master, my Saviour, and my God. Enlighten more and more my understanding, that it may not lose sight of thy divinity; touch more and more my heart, that it may be moved by the sufferings of thy blessed humanity. Amen.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE KISS OF JUDAS. MATT. XXVI.
47—50. MARK XIV. 43—45. LUKE
XXII. 47, 48.

FIRST POINT.

I. While Jesus yet spake, lo, Judas one of the twelve came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves sent by the chief priests and scribes and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him and lead him away safely.—How many crimes are here in one! How many odious circumstances! What atrocious treachery! What a fall for an apostle! He was called to be one of the foundations of the church and of our salvation, and he makes himself the leader and the guide of those who put the Saviour to death! What blindness in a man, who had been

a witness of the miracles of Jesus Christ, if he supposed that this band of armed men were capable of arresting him against his will! What perfidy, to employ the signal of peace and friendship to betray, to deliver up to his enemies a Master from whom he had received nothing but favours! What malice, to recommend to them to lead him so cautiously that he should not escape! Did he fear lest by his escape the vile price he had put upon him might be lost also! Judas is in this the head, the model, and the image of other apostates, who having forsaken the ways of piety, of the church, and of the true faith, breath nothing but hatred, violence, and treason; he is the head of hypocrites and seducers, who caress and flatter only to betray and to draw us into their snares: he is the model of those base wretches, who for a vile gain, from motives of interest and ambition, take part with the wicked, and go all lengths to minister to their passions; he is the image of those corrupt and faithless hearts, who, though they have embraced a more perfect state of life, give way to the dictates of a secret passion, to which at length they sacrifice every thing. How ought the example of Judas to

make us tremble and keep us upon our guard!

II. And Judas went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.—What, Judas has the face to appear again before Jesus Christ! Does he hope to impose upon him and to make his colleagues believe that he is still one of them, and that he has no connexion with the armed men who appear behind him! Ah Judas, thou art mistaken! Those exterior appearances of a pretended friendship cannot mislead him who penetrates the inmost heart, they can only augment the blackness of thy treachery, and render thee for ever infamous, and an object of horror to the whole universe. Alas! how grossly am I deceived myself, when I think to conceal the disorders of my soul! I act as if God did not see me, and often I cannot even escape the penetration of men!

SECOND POINT.

I. And Judas said to him, Hail Master! and he kissed him.—What! Jesus doth not turn away his sacred face from this unclean mouth, he receives this perfidious kiss, and even calls the traitor friend! This kiss was for Jesus a most

severe affliction. For what can be more cutting to a benevolent heart than treachery, and was there ever treachery more horrible than that of Judas! It is a disciple who betrays his master, who in order to betray him avails himself of his confidence, and of the knowledge he has of the place where his master goes to pray, and where he has often accompanied him, who takes advantage of the liberty he has of embracing him, and turns it against his benefactor. And what is the object of this treachery? Nothing less than to deliver up a Master so good, so holy, so irreproachable, to his enemies and to death! Ah! what a torment for the heart of Jesus! He suffered it to teach us how to suffer the like. But oh! what are the treacheries of which we complain compared with that which Jesus endures without complaint? Shall we never learn to suffer in the school of a Master who suffers so much for the love of us!

II. Judas was a monster of ingratitude, possessing a most unnatural heart. One cannot conceive whence should have sprung such an invenomed hatred against the best of masters; this action of his was most atrocious, and the whole proceeding was of the blackest die.

There is nothing that surpasses this excess of malice but the patience, the meekness, the goodness of Jesus. This divine Saviour still loves his perfidious and unworthy disciple; he pardons him, as he will shortly after pardon his executioners; he invites him to repentance, he gives him the title of friend, and there is as much sincerity and affection in the words of Jesus, as there is rancour and perfidy in those of Judas. Ah! shall we still hold out against this, our Master's example? Shall we be found full of resentment for the smallest offence, easily breaking out into complaints and reproaches, and always ready to make others feel the effects of our vengeance? Shall we still be found implacable towards him who has offended us, even when he seeks to give us proofs of his repentance?

III. Judas puts the finishing stroke to his reprobation—Judas damns himself; and the loss of his soul most sensibly affects the heart of Jesus. It is a cruel punishment for a zealous person to see one for whom we are particularly interested, whom we have instructed and educated in sentiments of piety, to see him alter at once, and advance with rapid strides in the ways of

iniquity, with the risk of never getting out of them and of being lost for ever! Of such a loss however we can only have our fears; but of the loss of Judas, Jesus had an entire certainty. Wretched apostle, to what has thy avarice brought thee! To what excess may not a passion lead, which has been neglected, indulged, and never wholly subdued! But it may be said, could not God change the heart of Judas? Doubtless. If then he could, why did not he do it? O men, who are ye to enter into judgment with God, and call him to an account for his conduct? Has God undertaken to multiply his graces, in proportion as we multiply the abuse of them? Is it not enough, in justification of his mercy, that he proportions his helps to our necessities? Must he then regulate them by the measure of our malice? No, no, let us not deceive ourselves, God alone knows the measure of the graces he designs for us. How many did not Judas receive? But Judas was blinded, obstinate, hardened: Judas resisted every thing, and Judas was damned. He, as well as all the reprobated, can only blame himself for his reprobation. What conclusion must we draw from thence? That which the apostle recommends,

that we ought to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Let us fear then to abuse, like Judas, the graces God has given us; let us watch, let us pray, let us tremble.

THIRD POINT.

I. *And Jesus said to him, friend, wherefore art thou come?*—And when Judas embraced him, he added, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man, with a kiss?* Jesus in these few words discovers to Judas all his affection for him, invites him to enter into himself, reveals to him the greatness of his crime, and intimates to him all the atrocity of his conduct. What heart would not have yielded to such tender expressions! Only such a heart as Judas's could resist them. But if this perfidious apostle pays no regard to them, let us not imitate him; let us treasure up these words with respect in order to apply them to ourselves.

II. Let us then apply to ourselves the first saying of Jesus. *Friend, wherefore art thou come?* St. Bernard was wont often to put this question to himself, when he placed before his eyes the end for which he was called. Let us in

like manner call to mind the end for which we were created, for which we came into this world, for which we were made Christians, for which we entered into the church, for which we have embraced such a particular state, and are arrived at the present period of our lives. Are we come here to do our own will, to live without restraint? No, we are come to serve God, to obey, to suffer, to labour, to sanctify our souls. Let us then apply this saying to the present time, that we may enter into ourselves; to the time to come, that we may bear up amidst the temptations and sufferings of our state; to the past time, that we may detest with a sincere contrition the errors into which we have fallen. What a life have I led, O my God! how many sins have I committed, how few virtues have I practised! Is it then for this that I am come? Is this what thou hadst reason to expect for the graces thou hast granted me, for the promises I have made to thee, for the fervour even with which I began? The reproach made to Judas suits me but too well, and I have deserved it but too often.

III. Let us apply to ourselves the second saying of Jesus, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss!* If ever

we have had the misfortune to make a sacrilegious confession and communion, let us apply these words to ourselves in the bitterness of our soul, and that we may detest from our whole heart so black a crime, let us comprehend all its malice. *Judas*, whom I called to the apostleship; and in like manner, you whom I have caused to be born in the bosom of my church, whom I have instructed, chosen, loaded with favours, is this your gratitude? You betray, you are a traitor, a perfidious hypocrite! You are guilty of the last ingratitude, and you fill up the measure of your crimes! *You betray the Son of Man*: It is your Saviour, your Judge whom you betray; the Son of God, the Almighty, whom you thus attack; it is his mysteries, his religion that you sport with, his sacred body which you profane, his blood which you trample under foot; it is himself that you deliver up to his enemies, to your passions, and to sin! *With a kiss!* It is at the tribunal of reconciliation that you come to affront him, and to lie to himself in the person of his minister; as if he did not hear your words, as if he did not see the very bottom of your heart! It is at the holy table, in the sacrament of his love,

that you come to insult him and declare war against him! This communion, the pledge of his tenderest affection, his bond of union with pure souls, you receive into a body defiled with impurities, into a heart filled with hatred and resentment against your neighbour! *With a kiss!* At such a sight who but would think you a kind and faithful friend, and you are only a perfidious traitor! You deceive men, this is what you wish; you deceive not Jesus, that you do not care about; but the day will come when your treachery shall be manifested to the world, and Jesus shall avenge his wrongs.

Why cannot I, O Jesus, by my respect and my love, make you some amends for the insult offered you by an unworthy communion! Ah! henceforth, O my Saviour, I will come to thy holy altar to give thee the kiss of peace; I will come not to deliver thee up to thy enemies, but to introduce thee into my heart; I will come, hungering after thy adorable flesh, and thirsting for thy precious blood; I will come therewith to feed and nourish my soul, to beseech thee to live in me, to transform me into thyself, that I may make but one with thee in time and eternity! Amen.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

ON THE POWER OF JESUS OVER THE
BAND OF SOLDIERS THAT CAME TO
TAKE HIM. JOHN xviii. 3—9.

FIRST POINT.

I. Judas, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and pharisees, cometh thither (to the garden) with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. —Were so many people, so much preparation necessary to seize a single man, and to surround a company of twelve persons! Advance then, soldiers; the signal is given, you see the man you are to arrest, and the feeble escort which attends him. But no, Jesus is here the Master, and will be so as long as it pleaseth him. His power binds you in invisible fetters, and you cannot stir a single step without his order. I adore thee, O divine power of Jesus! and I

acknowledge that, if thou yieldest to thy enemies, it is only because it pleaseth thee, only in obedience to the orders of thy Father, and out of love for me!

II. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? What peaceable proceedings are here on both sides, instead of the noise and tumult that might have been expected! But Jesus intended to convince us that his detention was not brought about by the force and violence of his enemies, and that he gave himself up to them only because it was his will, for the glory of his Father, and for our salvation. Let this truth be ever present to our minds during the whole course of his Passion, and may it excite in our hearts the most lively sentiments of gratitude! Hence also his servants ought to learn to present themselves on occasions with intrepidity, well assured that nothing will happen to them but by his permission, for his glory and their advantage.

III. They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them.—All that this band enraged against Jesus was able to do at this moment was to discover their wicked de-

signs ; but they were made sensible how unable they were to carry them into execution. What folly in sinners to rise up against God and against his Christ! Do they expect to get the better of the Creator of heaven and earth, of whom they hold their being and life? As soon as Judas had given our Saviour the perfidious kiss which was to serve as a signal, he retired into the midst of his band, that he might not be involved in the storm which was going to burst upon the companions of Jesus. But Judas was mistaken. The storm fell upon the band where he fancied himself in safety, and he was involved in it. Let us not imitate Judas; let us not take part with sinners; let us not fear their threats, or fly to them for safety; let not their number, their credit, their power impose upon us; all this is but weakness and nothingness before God. Rather let us side with the servants of Jesus Christ, let not their humility, their meekness, their want of power, their small number, the contempt in which they live, the persecutions which they suffer dishearten us! It is only amongst them that real safety can be found: their Master will one day be able to deliver them from oppression, to place

them in his glory, and to cover their enemies with eternal disgrace.

SECOND POINT.

I. *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground.*—Jesus sought not to intimidate these men by a harsh tone of voice, by threats and reproaches; in order to throw them to the ground, he had recourse only to these two words. *Ego sum, I am he*, but from his mouth they acquired all their energy, and all their efficacy. *I am he*, Jesus of Nazareth, conceived in the womb of a Virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost; the Word of God made man, at whose name every knee must bow in heaven, in earth, and in hell. At this word, at this tremendous name, soldiers and officers, Judas and his employers, all were overthrown at once. O mighty God, Son of God and of Mary, who can stand before thee! Who shall dare to rise up against thee! Who will not fall prostrate to adore thee, to implore thy mercy, to appease thy anger, to solicit thy love!

II. This overthrow of armed soldiers was but a slight figure of what Jesus

was to effect upon earth after he should have entered into his glory. At the name of Jesus, the idols with their temples and altars crumbled into dust; their priests and their advisers, emperors, kings and magistrates, the persecutors of this holy name, were overthrown and vanished from the earth, to make room for the priests of the new law, for the first Christians, for the faithful adorers of the only true God through his only Son Jesus Christ, and by means of the daily oblation of the unbloody sacrifice of his Passion and death.

III. If Jesus, who in the weakness of our flesh submitted to be judged, condemned, and put to death, was able with a single word to overthrow men armed and enraged against him, what will become of sinners when he shall come to judge them! When they shall see him on the throne of his justice, surrounded with glory and majesty, and when he shall say to them: *I am he*, whom ye have offended, despised, insulted, and persecuted! Woe to him in that day who shall be of that number, to him who shall have betrayed Jesus, who shall have neglected his state of life, his vocation, his duties, who shall have forsaken the party of the just to side with sinners!

What must have been the astonishment of Judas when he saw that he himself and his satellites were cast on the ground by a single word ! What must have been the joy of the apostles when they saw their enemies fall before them, and how easily their Master overthrew them ! Slender image of what will be the sentiments at the last day of the just, on one side, and, on the other, of sinners, and particularly of apostates ; of those who shall have abandoned the cause of piety, of religion, and of the church ; of those who shall have been foremost in supporting, animating, encouraging sinners by their authority, their discourses, and their examples.

THIRD POINT.

I. Jesus suffered them to rise from the ground, *then asked he them again, Whom seek ye! and they answered, Jesus of Nazareth.*—What ! still the same design, the same hatred, the same fury, no change, no repentance, no apprehensions ! Alas ! how often have we seen the haughty humbled, the rich reduced to poverty, the ambitious degraded, the voluptuous worn down with ills and infirmities ! And when have we seen

them changed, moved to repentance, disgusted with the object of their passion! If sometimes, in the height of their ill fortune, they hold edifying language which would seem to indicate their conversion, wait till God suffers them to rise, till he affords them opportunities, till he restores them to their health and strength, and you will see them as ardent, as furious, as obstinate, as debauched, as impious, and perhaps more so than they were before. Ah! of what consequence it is not to give way to any passion since it is so seldom got the better of!

II. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore you seek me, let these go their way.—With these words Jesus surrendered himself into their hands; but at the same time he forbade them to touch his disciples. In this point Jesus was obeyed, and it is thus that he performed the promise he had made to his apostles; for he here lays this prohibition on the soldiers, *that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, of them that thou gavest me have I lost none.* Ah! what a kind Master do we serve! Whilst he delivers himself up for us, he is careful to preserve and protect us! What greatness! what power!

However furious may be the enemies of his holy name, he knows how to repress their fury, and they can do nothing against us without his permission. How faithful is he in his promises, and how sweet it is to put all our confidence in him! When he appears to forget himself, he does not forget us, he defends us, he directs us; he supports us, and will one day deliver us for ever from the enemies of our salvation, provided we persevere in our fidelity to him.

III. Is it not inconceivable that these men, all at once thrown to the ground, should rise up quietly and pursue their first design, without making any reflection on so extraordinary and unexpected an event! They still fancy that they can take *him* by force, who overthrew them all by a single word; they fancy him subdued by *their* efforts, and a captive in *their* chains. Thus were accomplished the words of Jesus, *Ye shall die in your sin.* God has not promised us miracles of grace to withdraw us from a blindness in which we willingly persist. It is a folly for the sinner to reckon on the efficacy of the graces he *shall* receive, when he resists the graces he *does* receive; it is blasphemy in him to impute to God and to

the want of succours from above his final impenitence, which he ought to impute to his own obstinacy in rejecting the succours which God has offered him. Jesus is equally true in his threats and in his promises ; his end in both is to gain our love and draw us to himself.

O powerful God, I will fear thee ! O charitable God, I will love thee ! Prostrate at thy feet, O Jesus ! I will never cease to implore thy mercy ! Neither obstinacy nor presumption shall raise me up, but only an humble confidence in thee. All the fury of devils and men is of no avail against those whom thy Father has given thee. You say to them, *let these go their way*, and this word is sufficient for our security. Be thou blessed, O my God, for this all-powerful protection which thou grantest us ! O never withdraw it from me, and grant that I may never reject it ! Amen.

NINTH MEDITATION.

ON ST. PETER'S ZEAL IN DEFENDING
HIS MASTER. MATT. XXVI. 50—54.
MARK XIV. 46, 47. LUKE XXII. 49
—51. JOHN XVIII. 10, 11.

FIRST POINT.

I. *When they who were about Jesus saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?*

—We cannot but admire here the attachment of the apostles for their Master, their confidence in his power, which left them no doubt that they should be able, only with two swords, to defend him against this multitude of armed men; finally their docility in consulting him. It is true they were in an error, because they had not understood the words which Jesus had said to them; but this error was excusable, since our

blessed Saviour suffered them to remain in it, and it serves for our instruction. Let us avoid their blindness whilst we imitate their virtues!

II. And one of them who stood by, Simon Peter, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And the servant's name was Malchus. But Jesus said, Suffer ye thus far.—Stop, go no further. It was to his disciples Jesus said this; but the soldiers shewed themselves not less obedient than the disciples themselves. It was natural that this first blow would be avenged by a thousand others; yet we see that a single word stops all further proceedings. Who is it that speaks thus and is obeyed? This was the question asked when Jesus calmed the winds and the sea; but the prodigy here is still more astonishing. Jesus permitted this assault for reasons worthy of his wisdom. On one side, he wished to give his disciples an opportunity of testifying their fidelity and love for him; on the other, he wished himself for an occasion of manifesting his power and his meekness, and of instructing his church by speaking to him whom he had already marked for its head. Jesus performs all this with

an authority which kept all his enemies in awe. He is going to work miracles in their presence with as much dignity as in the plains of Galilee; he is going to instruct his disciples as composedly as at his last supper; he is going to address his enemies themselves with as much liberty as he did in the temple, when he seemed to be backed by the good will of all the people. Jesus perhaps never appeared greater than in the Garden of Olives, in that very place where he submitted to be bound for our sakes. All things obey thee, O Lord! shall I only rebel against thee? When in the first motions of anger, hatred, revenge, or any other passion, thou sayest to my heart, *Stop, go no further,* shall I dare to slight thy voice and transgress thy commandments?

III. And he touched his ear and healed him.—Malchus was about to lay his hand on Jesus as a malefactor, and Jesus lays his hand on him as his benefactor, to cure him. What goodness, what meekness, what charity! But Malchus and his accomplices remained unmoved. They knew that Jesus was in the habit of working miracles, and they had long been hardened against this proof of his divinity. All the conclusion

their blindness drew from it was, that with regard to Jesus, according to the advice of Judas, they must use every precaution. Is it possible to carry folly and blindness to a greater length! As for us, let us learn from the example of our divine Master, to do good to those who seek only to do us evil.

SECOND POINT.

I. *Then said Jesus unto him, (Peter) put up thy sword into the sheath; for all they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword.*—Our Lord here points out the only kind of arms worthy of him, of his disciples and his religion, to wit, meekness, patience, charity, silence, and prayer. To these arms he promises victory. By these arms only hath the church maintained her ground, and will maintain it till the end of ages. The victory which he has gained solely by the use of these arms distinguishes her from every other society, and is an evident proof of her divine origin. But are we true disciples of this divine Master, and children of this holy church, if for our own defence we use any arms but his, and if we attempt to repel the sword by the sword? Nevertheless what

do we see? We are injured, and we endeavour to injure; we are slandered, and we slander others; we are reviled, and we revile again, and so on. But is this the way to overcome? No, we should only draw vexation upon ourselves; and even should we overcome, our victory would be our shame, and would only deserve punishment. Would we secure to ourselves a conquest truly glorious? Let us put up the sword into the scabbard, that is to say, let us restrain our tongues, let us repress our desires, let us stifle our resentments: and if our sword has already inflicted a wound, let us heal it by our submission, by our good offices, by repairing speedily the wrong done. To repel violence, contempt and insult, let us have recourse to patience only, and the victory and the crown are secure to us.

II. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?—Nothing shews us more how much the oblation of our Lord was voluntary, than to consider the extent of his power. With a single word he was able to cast his enemies to the ground, and could as easily have deprived them of life. One of his dis-

ciples, armed with a sword, would have defeated a whole army under his protection. Had he wished for a more signal vengeance, millions of angels would have flown to fight for him, and defend their King. But no, his love for us forbids all the succours which he might have procured from his Father and from himself, from angels and men. The time will come when the whole universe will arm in his behalf, but now he makes no use of his power; and if he gives us an intimation of it, it is that we may know that he surrenders himself to his enemies, not through weakness, but out of love to us; that it is not through weakness that he suffers his servants to be oppressed, his church to be persecuted, but in conformity with the designs of his wisdom and power towards us. Let us fear then nothing under so powerful a Master, let us put ourselves under his guidance, and glory to walk in his footsteps.

III. But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?—A saying worthy of the respect, the obedience, and the love of the Son of God for his Father. Let us adopt it for ourselves, and apply it to

every difficulty, little or great, which we meet with in the practice of virtue. These troublesome duties of our state of life, these pleasures which we must give up, this sickness, this poverty, this loss, this contempt, this affront, this precaution, these are the chalice we have to drink; and we should drink it from two motives: 1st, Because it is presented to us by God our Father, all creatures being only instruments in his hands: 2dly, Because our Saviour drank it first, and after him his apostles and all the saints. Now, what comparison is there between our chalice and his? Shall we be so cowardly as to refuse to drink it? Are we ignorant that, after having drunk of this chalice, we shall drink for ever in heaven of the torrent of his pleasure? Shall we prefer to drink of the poisoned cup of sinners? But do not we know that after their short and shameful enjoyments, they will drink to the dregs the cup of the wrath of God in eternal torments? We shall not find then a heavenly Father who will present to us the chalice of salvation, but an avenging God, whose justice will be without mercy.

No, Lord, I will never listen to those false friends, who would persuade me

to moderate the sufferings attached to my state of life! This is the cup which thou hast given me, and I will drink it to the dregs. I will suffer every thing from my brethren without resistance or complaint; so thou hast taught me by thy example. Though it is from men that I suffer, it is thou, O God, who like a tender parent, triest or chastisest me by their hands! Amen.

TENTH MEDITATION.

ON JESUS GIVING HIMSELF UP TO HIS ENEMIES. MATT. XXVI. 55, 56. MARK XIV. 48—51. LUKE XXII. 52, 53.

FIRST POINT.

I. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders who were come to him, Are ye

come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid not hold of me.—Whenever Jesus came to Jerusalem, he went to teach in the temple. In the course of this very week, he had appeared there every day. They might have recollect ed with what acclamations he was received there the first day, with what assiduity he had continued to teach there the other days; and how on the Tuesday, only two days back, they had attacked him themselves and by their emissaries; how he had answered the captains questions which they had proposed to him; and finally how, under the disguise of sundry parables, he had forewarned them of the crime they were about to commit, and of the punishment which was soon to follow. They might have remembered how often they had wanted to seize him, and had as often seen their designs thwarted, and their projects overthrown. This recollection might have made them enter into themselves, or at least might have contributed to their conversion after the resurrection. But if all this was no avail to them, let it not be so to us. Let us acknowledge that Jesus Christ always acted as Master and as

the Son of God, that he withdrew himself from the fury of his enemies, and afterwards surrendered himself to them, when it was his will, when the obedience he owed to his Father, and his love for us required it of him.

II. But this is your hour and the power of darkness. And all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.—After speaking these words, (full of dignity, majesty, and divinity, Jesus removed the invisible barrier which had hitherto kept back his enemies. They felt that they were no longer restrained; and, with the most incomprehensible animosity and blindness, they prepared to consummate the horrible crime which they came to execute, in spite of all the prodigies of power, meekness, and charity which they had just witnessed. *This is your hour.*—How unhappy is the hour which God in his anger grants us for sin! *And the power of darkness:* a fatal power, which we exercise only to offend God, and to further the designs of hell;—a horrible *darkness*, which for a moment veils the crimes of the wicked, and hinders them from seeing the precipice into which they are fallen, and which will be followed by utter dark

ness and the torments of hell. *But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.*—Unhappy he who only fulfils the Scriptures in regard to what they say of sinners, of their criminal excesses, of their obduracy, of their final impenitence, and of the torments which are prepared for them! Am not I, have not I been, shall not I be of their number? May these divine and terrible words of our Saviour fill me with terror, deter me from sin, and stop me on the brink of the precipice.

SECOND POINT.

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.—I. This flight was the effect of their infidelity. Jesus did not require them to fight for him—on the contrary, he had forbid them: he did not require them to follow him to torments and to death—on the contrary, he commanded the soldiers to let them withdraw. What then ought the apostles to have done? They should have retired upon the word of their Master, well assured that no harm would befall them; and that, on the third day, according to his promise, they should see him risen again. But they never would under-

stand what he had told them of the mystery of his death and resurrection. They abandoned him, therefore, because they did not trust in the truth of his word, and in the aid of his Almighty power; but in themselves, and in a precipitate flight. Only a moment before, they were ready to fight for him: they protested that they would be faithful to him unto death. How soon are their ideas and resolutions changed! But, if we understand the matter rightly, they have not changed; they would still be ready to fight and die for him with arms in their hands. If they fly, it is because the temptation they meet with is very different from what they had expected. It was question of seeing their Master in fetters, in torments, expiring on a cross; and, nevertheless, to believe in him as the Son of God—to hope in him as the Restorer of the kingdom of Israel and the Saviour of mankind: and this is what they would never understand, and for what they were nowise prepared. Let us be ware of falling into the fault of the apostles, by deceiving ourselves as to the nature of the temptations to which we may be exposed. If it were question of taking up arms for the cause of reli-

gion, nothing is more easy or more natural to man: Mahometans, Pagans, heretics have done it. But this is not what Jesus requires—it is even what he forbids: what we must aim at, is, to be humble, obedient, meek, patient, chaste, pious, just, modest, recollected, united to God; and to this will belong the temptations we shall have to surmount.

II. This flight was an effect of Providence. God in his wisdom knows how to draw good out of evil, and his Providence makes every thing serve for the execution of his designs. This flight was to Jesus a torment, which he was pleased to endure only to set us an example, and to merit for us grace to support similar trials. This flight had been foretold by the prophets and by Jesus himself: thus it served to the accomplishment of the divine oracles. This flight made the apostles afterwards sensible of their own weakness—and it warns us of ours. This flight makes known to us the power of the Holy Ghost, who could in a moment change them from cowards into men of intrepidity and courage. This flight, so ingenuously related, is a proof of the truth of the evangelical history. Men cannot be suspected of falsehood who publish

so openly their weakness, their cowardice, and their shame. Finally, this flight confirms the testimony which the apostles bore to Jesus Christ, and gives an irresistible weight to their words. Let us adore the wonderful ways of God, and thank him for having thus multiplied the proofs of the divine truths he has taught us.

III. This flight was an effect of the power of Jesus. Nothing was so important to the synagogue as to arrest, at the same time, the Master and the disciples, and to cut off at once this sect, which it hated, and from which it had every thing to fear. But to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, is not a thing left to the power of men. This word of Jesus Christ, *Let these go their way*, is immutable and eternal. It is He who, in the most cruel persecutions, makes choice of those who are to be crowned, and of those who are to continue his work ; and no power of earth or hell can infringe this command—*Let these go their way!* Soon we shall see these trembling and fugitive apostles come forward boldly, and become the foundations of the church, and the unshaken pillars of truth. What can be greater or more divine !

THIRD POINT.

I. And there followed him a young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body.—Who was this young man, and how came he in a place of so much danger for him? No doubt, an inhabitant of the village of Gethsemani, awakened by the noise, and brought thither by curiosity. How many young persons have been victims of an indirect curiosity, and have thereby lost their peace of mind, their worldly goods, their innocence, and their lives!

II. And they laid hold of him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.—What this young man did to save his liberty and his life is not surprising: why do not we do as much to preserve our innocence, and to save the life of our souls! If we find ourselves in a perilous situation, or exposed to a dangerous temptation, let us fly upon the spot; let us leave our garment, if necessary, like Joseph; let us run the risk of losing all, rather than the life of grace. Provided we escape from the hands of our enemies, what matters it in what condition? What, if our fortune or our reputation suffer!—

what if we become a subject of raillery, or an object of contempt! God is able to make us amends. All the rest is nothing compared with eternal life.

Why was not I, my Saviour, in the place of this young man? I should have been most happy to have given myself up to go with thee to Calvary—to die with thee, and on thy account. But, alas! what do I say—how do I deceive myself, since human respects, an empty honour, and the most trifling advantage have so often detached me from thy interests! Ah! Jesus, permit not such baseness any more. May thy love for me, which delivers thee into the hands of thy enemies, regulate all the motions of my heart, and teach it to suffer joyfully all I shall have to suffer for the love of thee! Amen.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE BONDS OF JESUS. JOHN xviii. 12.

FIRST POINT.

I. Then the band, and the captain, and the officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound him.—We may imagine with what fury these ravenous wolves fell upon the innocent lamb ; how violently they tightened the cords with which he was bound ; how many ways they pulled him and squeezed him ; how many times they made him stumble and fall down ; how inhumanly they dragged him along when fallen, and with how many blows they raised him up again ! O Jesus, what a prelude of what thou art going to endure for me ! What should I do for a friend, who would let himself be loaded with chains in my place ! What should I expect from a friend, whose place I should have taken in order to deliver him from his chains !

II. We may imagine the shouts of joy, which the enemies of Jesus raised when they saw him in their power—their hooting and abusive language—the reproaches with which they loaded him—the odious names they gave him, thereby manifesting not only their hatred, but their sovereign contempt of him. They considered him as weak, disarmed, overcome, incapable henceforward of doing any thing for his defence and for his glory.

III. We must consider the greatness of his love for us. Ah ! without the bonds of his love, of what avail would have been the bonds of his enemies? He would have broken them much more easily than Sampson did ; but his love delivered him up, and keeps him prisoner. O love, how powerful art thou, since thou art able to hold in bondage the Almighty! O ! subdue and vanquish me also, and captivate me in such a manner that nothing in me may ever resist thee, or separate me from Jesus, become a captive for my love!

SECOND POINT.

What advantages do we derive from the bonds of Jesus?—I. They

have fettered the devil, and set us at liberty. Jesus, by wearing them for us, has expiated the bad use which we had made of our liberty; he has broken the bonds of our iniquities, and delivered us from the disgraceful yoke in which the devil kept us enslaved; he has chained him himself, and keeps this furious lion tied up, who can now only devour those who are rash enough to approach him.

II. They are the consolation of captives, and the glory of the martyrs. Those who are detained in the prisons of human justice, whether they be guilty or innocent, find in the bonds of Jesus the means of sanctifying theirs, and a source of comfort and fortitude: but for those whom tyrants, in hatred of the faith, have taken up and thrown into irons, what strength have they not drawn from the bonds of Jesus Christ! How many have gloried in their chains, and, with reason, preferred them to the crowns and sceptres of the earth!

III. They attach us to God and to his service. The bonds of Jesus Christ have obtained for us the grace to know and to love the glory there is in serving God, and in remaining inviolably attached to him. To this indispensable

bond of the law of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and the desire of being more closely united to him, have added other bonds, which cannot be worn without an heroical courage, and which nevertheless are eagerly sought after by an infinite number of the children of the church of both sexes. We see them joyfully and for ever renounce their liberty—dispossess themselves of their wealth, and abandon all hopes of acquiring any—devote their bodies to mortification—subject themselves to an austere rule—wage perpetual war with their minds and hearts, and consent to pass their whole lives in a state of continual dependance.

THIRD POINT.

How do we dishonour the bonds of Jesus?—I. By disobeying the law of God, and not fulfilling the obligations of Christianity and the duties of our state: we thereby resume the fatal use of a criminal liberty which we had renounced. Instead of remaining attached to God, and in bonds with Jesus Christ, we put on again the chains of the devil, and subject ourselves to all the evils of the most abject slavery.

II. By not bearing patiently what we have to suffer from the hands of other men. Let us comprehend that the wrongs, the injustices, the ill treatment we experience in our commerce with the world, are opportunities offered us by Jesus Christ of wearing his bonds: but to murmur, to complain, to give way to impatience, to be angry, to seek revenge, is to reject the bonds of Jesus Christ, to be ashamed of them, and of course to dishonour them. Nevertheless, are those which he offers us more painful and more unjust than those which he has borne for us! Ah! if we reflected on it, we should blush at our own faint-heartedness!

III. By not aiming at the perfection to which God has called us. To neglect one's vocation, not to persevere in it, not to enter into the spirit of it nor fulfil its obligations, is to reject the bonds of Jesus Christ, and to prefer the trouble and tumult of the slavery of the world to the holy and peaceful liberty which is found in the service of God. It is also rejecting the bonds of Jesus Christ, to be unwilling to restrain our mind, our imagination, our senses, in order to preserve a recollection and attention at our devotions, and to maintain a fervour in

prayer. We reject these sweet bonds which would unite us to Jesus Christ, in order to give ourselves up to the spirit of dissipation; but the dryness, the hardness of heart, the indevotion, the uneasiness even and remorse which we experience, avenge our contempt of Jesus Christ, and make us groan under the slavery of the senses, while so many others enjoy a delicious liberty in the bonds of love which unite them to Jesus.

O my Saviour! I both can and will mitigate the weight of thy chains by seconding thy grace in order to break those which bind me to sin; grant me this grace, O Jesus! Free in captivity, O my divine Redeemer, it is thy love for me that binds thee! Grant that henceforth I may bear no chains but those of thy love! Amen.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

ON THE FIRST COUNCIL OF THE JEWS
HELD AT NIGHT, WHERE JESUS AP-
PEARS AND IS JUDGED WORTHY OF
DEATH. MATT. XXV. 57—63. MARK
xiv. 53—61. LUKE XXII. 54. JOHN
xviii. 14—19—24.

FIRST POINT.

I. And they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high priest that same year. Now Caiphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. Then they brought him into the high priest's house, where the chief priests and the scribes and the elders were assembled.—Jesus was first led to Annas, who was one of the two high priests, both to shew him respect and to give him the pleasure of

seeing Jesus in fetters. Caiphas, the other high priest, his son-in-law, whose turn it was that year to exercise the functions of his office, was a young man of a hot and passionate temper, who had a particular enmity against Jesus. But fifteen days before, on occasion of the resurrection of Lazarus, he had opined for his death purely from political motives, without any complaint against him but the multitude of his miracles. It was to this pontiff's house that Jesus was brought to be judged. Annas sent him thither, and followed him shortly after. The other judges were the priests, the scribes, the elders of the people, most of them Pharisees, and many of them Sadducees, who did not believe in a future state. All these judges were enemies to Jesus, who had a hundred times baffled them in argument, and had detected their corruption, their rapine, and their hypocrisy. They were already assembled at the house of Caiphas. Most of them had prejudged the case by opining before with the high priest for the death of Jesus, and the rest were equally obsequious to his wishes. Such was the impious and bloody-minded council, before which condescended to appear as a

criminal the Messias, the Son of God, the eternal Judge of the living and the dead. He did so, in order to expiate the injustice of our judgments, and to teach us to bear the injustice of those which are passed upon us.

II. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine.—Here is a very vague and very irregular examination ; for what is more absurd than to arrest a man without any complaint made against him ; what more unusual than to begin by interrogating him upon his concerns, without bringing forward any ground of accusation ? For more than three years that Jesus had taught publicly in the temple and elsewhere, his doctrine had often been admired and never found fault with, even by those who are now his judges.

III. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them who heard me, what I have said unto them, behold, they know what I have said.—Wisdom, though in fetters, is still free. We here find in Jesus the same meekness and the same power of argument, which in the synagogue and the

Jesus desires it may be shewn in what he has spoken wrong ; what can be more reasonable ? But the silence observed and the impunity granted equally shew that the council approves of the insult offered. Let us adore in all this the admirable conduct of our Lord, and let us take his patience and wisdom for the rule of ours.

THIRD POINT.

I. Now the chief priests and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death, but found none, though many false witnesses came ; but their witnesses did not agree together.—

If the pontiff and the Jewish council had only wished to put Jesus to death, they might have done it without the forms of law, as they afterwards put to death St. Stephen ; they would have wanted no witnesses, or would have been satisfied with those who did present themselves. But their hatred to Jesus, and their wish to render him for ever infamous, made them desire that he should be put to death by a public sentence and by the punishment of the cross ; now at Jerusalem Pilate only was empowered to pass such a sentence. It

was question then of delivering up Jesus to him that he might condemn him to death, but for this it was necessary to produce such accusations and testimonies as might induce him to pronounce the sentence desired. Now here they were quite at a loss. For besides that these false testimonies did not agree, it is probable they only related to legal observances, or some doctrinal points which would have made little impression on the mind of the governor. Hence these judges of iniquity were in despair. Shamelessly laying aside all inquiries after the truth, they were uneasy because, even with their falsehoods, they could not find wherewithal to overreach the natural equity of a Pagan magistrate. What judges! Yet these were the grandees and most reputable personages of the nation.

II. At the last came two false witnesses and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another that is made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.—These two were false witnesses because they changed the

words of our Lord, who had not said, *I am able to destroy*, nor *I will destroy*, but *destroy*, or *you will destroy*. They were false witnesses also, because they applied to the material temple of Jerusalem, what Jesus said of the temple of his body. These judges however did not think this accusation of a nature to be brought before Pilate, but they laid great stress on it before the people, and even reproached Jesus with it, when on the cross. What atrocity and malice in all this! But let us here admire the dispositions of Providence, and how this prediction made by our Lord two years before is now objected to him by those who are carrying it into execution, and how it serves to fulfil itself. O wonderful depth of the ways of God! O how short sighted are the views of men! The wicked, even by their own malice, concur in the designs of God.

III. *And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing to what these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace and answered nothing.*—O eternal Wisdom, who hadst just before spoken so meekly, yet so forcibly, why dost thou now keep silence, when false witnesses rise up against thee, when the

high priest, forgetting all decorum, rushes, like a madman, out of his place, to question you himself upon the cause of your silence? But in this, as in all the rest, thou accomplishest the prophecies, which compare thee to the lamb standing dumb before the shearer, and thy wisdom shines forth equally in thy silence and in thy words. For why shouldst thou speak, when thy accusers contradict themselves, make only false and frivolous objections, and when even thy judges take no pains to conceal their animosity, their fury, their injustice! Alas! how little do I imitate thee! Is it not on these very occasions that I think I have a right to launch out and to complain to all the world! Alas! how ill I understand my own interests that I do not join in thy silence! By suffering, without justifying myself, the false accusations of men, I should expiate, through thy merits, the true and enormous accusations which my multiplied sins bring against me. Why shouldst thou complain of the injustice done thee, since thou knowest that thy heavenly Father will do thee justice, and will crown thy silence with glory by appointing thee judge of all mankind? Ah! how little should I myself value

the judgments of men, if I reflected that their injustice, borne in silence, would be for me at thy judgment a source of happiness and glory!

Grant me grace, O my Saviour, to imitate thy example! Far be from me that maxim, so contrary to thine, that there are injuries which it is necessary to expiate by revenge! How noble, how eloquent is thy silence! All the oracles uttered by thy sacred mouth, all the miracles wrought, when thou commandest the winds, the sea, the devils, diseases and death, have not proved so evidently thy divinity, as does thy heroic patience this day. Teach me, O Jesus, faithfully to imitate it! Amen.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE SEQUEL AND END OF THE FIRST
COUNCIL OF THE JEWS HELD AT
NIGHT. MATT. XXVI. 63—66. MARK
xiv. 61—64.

FIRST POINT.

I. Again the high priest questioned him and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the blessed God? And Jesus said, I am: and hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.—

The answer of Jesus is such as must always be given when faith is in question. He who does not speak out plainly when he is questioned as to faith, is convicted of betraying it. Jesus knew well the use which would be made of

his answer, and that his death would be the consequence; but we are bound to confess the faith at the peril of our lives.

II. Jesus manifests in his own person Christ wholly and entirely. It is as if he had said to them, You only know Christ by the glory in which the prophets have foretold that he will appear, and you will not acknowledge him in the works of goodness and mercy, which he performs miraculous as they are. Still less are you willing to acknowledge him in the humiliations and sufferings which have been foretold of him. Now I am the Christ to whom these two kinds of prophecies apply. These two characteristics of the Messiah appear to be in opposition to each other only to such persons who do not distinguish the times. You have seen my miracles, you are accomplishing my humiliations. You ask where is the glory of my kingdom, and because you do not see it, you refuse to believe in me; nevertheless, though I am in bonds and you are unbelievers, I declare to you that after having rejected me, insulted me, and put me to death, you will see me hereafter in the splendour of my glory, a divine and heavenly glory, very different

from the earthly glory, which alone is the object of your esteem and adoration.

III. Jesus says all in a few words, but without drawing any conclusion, without uttering any threat or reproach. For he might have said, You judge me now because it is my will that you should do so, but I shall judge you in my turn, and against your will: you condemn me though you find me wholly innocent, and I shall condemn you after having manifested your crimes to the whole universe: you condemn me to a temporary death, from which I shall easily set myself free, and I shall condemn you to an eternal death, from which no one can deliver you. How noble and divine are those short words in which our Lord expresses so much!

SECOND POINT.

Let us consider three motives for the answer which Jesus made to the high priest. First motive—his respect for the holy name of God. The Jews hated the light, they sought it only to extinguish it, and therefore did not deserve to have it shewn to them; but the invocation of the holy name of God, though made use of by an impious wretch, in order to

compass the death of the only Son of Him, whom he pretends to honour, forces this adorable Son to break silence. He alone truly knows the living God, by whom he is adjured ; he alone can pay him due homage, praise, and benediction ; and it is only through him that the living God receives the homage of all his creatures. I adore thee, O great God ! I praise thee, I bless thee, I give thee thanks, I offer thee my prayers and supplications, through our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, world without end.

Second motive.—The glory of confessing his own most holy name. To confess the name of Jesus and his divinity, and to give one's life in testimony of this truth, is the highest honour in this world ; and Jesus Christ would not himself be deprived of this glory. He was pleased to be the head of his martyrs and to set them the example, in order to inspire us all with a desire of partaking of so great a happiness, and to dispose us to suffer and to die in his cause.

Third motive.—The love of Jesus for us. If the answer of Jesus was to serve as a pretext to the Jews to put

him to death, it was also to be to many Christians a source of life. It was for me then, O Jesus, that thou gavest so clear an answer as to thy divinity—so formal a declaration of the power and majesty, with which thou wilt come to judge the universe. I believe, O my Saviour, all thou hast here declared; I adore thy humiliation, and I await the day of thy glory! In that terrible day rank me not with thy enemies, but come to me as to a faithful servant, who has loved thee, and is resolved to love thee for ever!

THIRD POINT.

Then the high priest rent his garments. —This action was indecent in a supreme pontiff, and in the midst of such an assembly: it was the effect of passion and rage, and tended only to inspire the council with the same sentiments: it was hypocritical—for under this mark of religious indignation, Caiphas concealed the joy which he felt at having, in the answer of Jesus, a pretext to put him to death; but it was, above all, mysterious and prophetic—for it contained a mystery which he himself did not understand, any more than the

sense of the prophecy, *that one man should die for the people*, which he had pronounced a few days before. Rend thy garments, worthless pontiff! before this day shall pass, the veil of the temple shall be rent also—both signs that the priesthood of Aaron, and the sacrifices of the law of Moses are abolished, to make room for the royal and eternal priesthood of the true Melchisedech ; and for the spotless victim which you are going to immolate, and which will afterwards be offered to God not in one temple only, but in all parts of the earth till the end of the world.

II. *Then the high priest rent his garment, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses?* What a strange decision! The question is to know whether Jesus is the Messiah : he is asked if he is so ; he answers that he is ; where then is the blasphemy? Must the true Messiah then deny that he is so? If they will not believe Jesus on his word, they should make further inquiry, but this they take care not to do. Again, by declaring that after this avowal of Jesus, there was no further need of witnesses, the pontiff admits that there *was* need of others after those that had already spoken, after those

whose testimony he had laid so much stress upon, and to which he had urged our Saviour to make answer. It is thus that all the tribunals which condemned Jesus Christ have borne witness of his innocence. Thou hast ordered it so, O Lord, not so much for thy glory as for our consolation! Jesus has insured the same glory to his spouse the church; for those heretics who have most blasphemed her doctrines, have all begun by acknowledging her authority and that of her head, and by professing their respect for her, and their submission to her decrees.

III. Behold now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you? And they all said, he is guilty of death. Nothing could be more irregular than thus to call for the votes publicly and in general, and upon a matter which was not the question. It was well known, that according to the law, a blasphemer deserved death. The high priest ought to have asked each of the judges, without attempting to bias them, their opinion as to the answer of the accused person. Equitable judges would have exclaimed against such an unheard-of way of proceeding; but for a long time back, those who had any integrity, such as Nico-

demus and others, came no more to the council, and those who came thither were all devoted to the high priest, and as corrupt as himself.

'Thou art then, O my Saviour, judged worthy of death by the council of thy nation, and renounced by thy own people! The prophets had foretold it, and it appeared incredible; but lo! it is here accomplished. O Jesus, what were thy sentiments when thou heardst this sentence of death thus unanimously pronounced against thee! Thou wert pleased to accept it with joy, and to offer thyself in silence to thy Father for the love of us. Ah! how great should be my gratitude! It was I who deserved death; but my death was not worthy to be offered to thy Father, or to appease his just indignation. Apply then to me, O Jesus, the merits of thy Passion and death! Amen.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE OUTRAGES WHICH JESUS UNDER-
WENT IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS.
MATT. XXVI. 67, 68. MARK XIV. 65.
LUKE XXII. 63—65.

FIRST POINT.

Then did they spit in his face.—When the council had adjudged Jesus to be worthy of death, the judges withdrew to take a few hours rest; and the assembly was appointed to meet again at the dawn of day. Jesus was then left at the mercy of his guards, of the soldiery, and of the servants; and he submitted to all the outrages which they chose to offer him. The first was to spit in his face. This is the greatest indignity that can be offered to any man, and the highest mark of contempt that can be shewn him. No one ever heard of a criminal,

of however detestible a character, being surrounded by people employed in spitting in his face, and making an amusement of such an insult. This outrage was reserved for the King of Glory. The prophet Isaias had announced it, and Jesus Christ had pointed out this circumstance, when he foretold his Passion. But what we cannot comprehend is that God should please to humble his Son, and that the Son himself should please to be humbled to an excess which is shocking, not only to delicacy, but to nature; and it should seem, to reason itself. Do we wish to know the cause of this? It is that Jesus took upon himself to make satisfaction to the divine justice for us; and that this excess of humiliation was not judged too great to expiate that pride, which leads us to offend God and violate his laws, to reason about God and condemn his ways. Dust and ashes that we are, if Jesus had not offered himself to suffer for us these uncommon humiliations; our pride, like that of the fallen angels, would have been punished with eternal ignominy. Let us make a proper estimate of the value of those humiliations, of the gratitude we ought to have for him who endured them for us; and how

much we ought to desire to share them with him, in order to expiate by his merits the enormous guilt of our pride.

SECOND POINT.

And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. Some buffeted him, and others struck him on the face with the palms of their hands.—We were astonished at the blow on the face, which Jesus received in the council; what shall we say now that we see him in the hands of these vile and despicable wretches, who take a barbarous and cruel delight in insulting him and overwhelming him with blows and indignities? They strike him every where—on the body, on the head, on the face, and all of them load him with insults; he is pushed about, hooted, laughed at, treated in fine as the most criminal and contemptible of men: and this insolent soldiery is not restrained by their officers, nor the servants by their masters. No, they are all agreed: they all conspire against Jesus. His patience irritates his ferocious tormentors, his meekness displeases them, his silence excites their fury; they redouble their blows, they renew their outrages, and this in-

human spectacle continues all the night. But, O Lord, hast thou then entirely forgotten the care of thy glory? What will be thought of thee, what will future ages think of thee, when they know how thou wert treated, without even opening thy mouth to justify thyself or to complain? O Sovereign Majesty! how pure, how heavenly, how divine is thy glory, which is not annihilated, or even obscured by so many insults; but only becomes the brighter and more worthy of admiration! Yes, thy humiliations are known to the whole world, and we know that thou hast submitted to them by thy own choice; that it was for love of us, to expiate our pride and unjust complaints, to strengthen our weakness, to make us invincible and capable of bearing all things for thy love: that it was in fine to make us partakers of thy immortal glory, which thou sharest with thy faithful servants, in proportion as they have shared in thy humiliations, and borne them with an interior patience and humility most conformable to thine.

THIRD POINT.

And they blindfolded him and struck him on the face, and asked him, saying,

Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against him.— These outrages are all equally atrocious and unheard of. The bandage with which the Jews veil the eyes of the Saviour and supreme Judge of mankind, is the image of the impiety of sinners; who live as if God did not see them, or as if they had covered his eyes in order to sin with impunity. It is the image of the imprudence of a dissipated mind, which voluntarily turns away from its attention to the divine presence, to indulge in a succession of idle thoughts; and which gives up the heart to frivolous amusements, and to dangerous, if not criminal pursuits. O divine Jesus, I conjure thee by thy infinite patience in bearing with these wretches who blind-folded thee, and also in bearing with me; I conjure thee to tear away the blind which I myself have put on my eyes, and on my heart: shew me thy adorable face, let me contemplate thy divine eyes that I may read in them thy holy will, that I may therein behold thy love; and that I may dread the implacable wrath with which they are inflamed against those, who abuse thy goodness to the last!

After they had covered the face of Jesus and blindfolded his eyes, the outrages went on with redoubled fury; each one in his turn struck him on the face, saying insultingly, as he withdrew, prophecy to us who struck thee? others according to the Prophet Isaias, tore off his beard and hair. And St. Luke gives us to understand, that the evangelists have not entered into the whole detail of what passed during this dreadful scene. But what they have told us is sufficient to make us comprehend to what excess they carried their insolence and outrages, and with what excessive patience Jesus suffered all without shrinking, and without complaining. But let us not be so far incensed against the Jews as to forget that we ourselves are the authors of these outrages; since it was to expiate our sins, and to deliver us from the eternal confusion due to them, that Jesus underwent all these indignities. Thou knowest, O Lord, who it is that struck thee; and thou knowest all the malice of the action, all the ingratitude of his heart, and all the perverseness of his soul. Alas! it was I myself, as often as I have sinned, as often as I have gone away from thy divine presence, in order

to offend thee more freely. By exterminating me, O Lord, thou mightest have spared thyself so many outrages; it was what I deserved, but what thou would not consent to. Thou choosest rather to suffer all, to drink the chalice to the dregs, in order to reconcile me to thy Father and to save me. Ah! what excess of love! Let us consider, O my soul, how we can testify our gratitude.

1st. By our respect. Whenever we hear the name of Jesus Christ pronounced, or that we pronounce it ourselves, let us adore it with profound respect, not only because his holy name is great and adorable, but also in memory of the outrages which the Jews offered to our divine Master, in derision of this holy name. Let us shew the same respect to the image of our Lord and of his cross; but particularly when we are before the blessed sacrament, let us strive, by our outward reverence and by the profound abasement of our souls to repair the insult which he suffered for our sakes, which we have perhaps renewed by our disrespect to this august mystery, and which are daily renewed by so many wicked Christians.

2d. By our love; considering how much Jesus must have loved us to have

been willing to suffer so many outrages in order to reconcile us to his heavenly Father, whose terrible and eternal vengeance we had justly incurred. Ah ! what flames of love would not such a consideration enkindle in our hearts, if we gave it the attention it deserves !

3d. By our imitation. The Lord is far from exposing us to the same trials to which he exposed his Son ; but at least in the slight trials which he throws in our way, let us not lose the opportunity of shewing our gratitude to him by suffering joyfully, that we may bear him some resemblance. If then the name of Christian or Catholic, if our attachment to Jesus Christ, to the true faith, to the duties of religion, to the obligations of our state draw down upon us railleries, contempt, offensive and injurious language, let us beware of resenting it, or of being deterred from the practice of our duty. Let us remember to imitate the patience of our Master, and let us rejoice in having an occasion of imitating it. Ah ! what graces and interior consolations will not such sentiments procure us ! Let us conduct ourselves in like manner on every occasion when we shall have any thing to suffer from our neighbour. Let us restrain all

complaints, all emotions of revenge, all inward murmuring, and all the repugnances of nature. Let us compare what we have to suffer with what Jesus Christ has suffered for us, and we shall blush to find within us a particle of opposition and resistance.

Grant me, O Lord, the happiness of partaking in thy ignominies, and of looking upon them as a treasure more estimable than all the riches in the world ! Amen.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

ON ST. PETER'S FALL. MATT. XXVI. 58,
69—74. MARK XIV. 54, 56—72.
LUKE XXII. 54—60. JOHN XVIII. 15—
18, 25—27.

FIRST POINT.

I. Now Peter followed Jesus afar off that he might see the end.—The fall of

Peter was owing principally to his negligence and his presumption. Jesus had warned his apostles, and Peter in particular, of the necessity of watchfulness and prayer. He had moreover set them the example; he had himself twice interrupted his prayer to go and exhort Peter to pray with him. Peter stood the most in need of it, because he had shewn himself the most presumptuous; for he had carried his presumption so far as to prefer himself to all the rest, to believe nothing of what Jesus said to them, and even to pay no attention to his divine words. Here is the first cause of our falls, our neglect of meditation and mental prayer. And what makes us neglect them? Our presumption which blinds us, and persuades us that we stand not in need of these helps. After the apostles betook themselves to flight, Peter measured back his steps, and followed Jesus at a distance. Ah Peter, whither are you going? Have you forgot that Jesus told you that you could not follow him now, but that you should one day follow him? Why anticipate the time? It is true you answered that you were ready to follow him to prison, and to death; but you cannot deny that the ardour of your

courage is already abated; he does not follow Jesus long, who only follows him at a distance; ah! rather return to your colleagues, seek not ostentatiously to distinguish yourself from them, or you will be distinguished to your own confusion.

II. And another disciple followed him also; that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Entering into the town, Peter was joined by another disciple who was known to the high priest, and who went in at the same time with Jesus into the house of Caiphas; but the door-keeper, not knowing Peter, refused him admission. Had Peter now retired, he would have preserved his innocence, and moreover have acquired the glory of having done more than the other apostles, and of having followed his Master as long as he could; but his obstinacy, and his curiosity to see the end, kept him at the door. The other disciple, finding there was no safety in this house, under the present circum-

stances, for any friend of Jesus, went out again; and Peter, who came with him, might naturally have returned with him: but no; he had thought himself more courageous than the other apostles, and he now thinks himself stouter than this disciple. He entreats him to procure him admission; the disciple speaks to the door-keeper, and at his request Peter is admitted. Alas! how often are we blindly bent upon our own ruin! The world rejects us, and we seek it; the occasion of evil escapes us, and we run after it; neither the counsel of the Lord, nor the frowns of the world, nor the example of the just, nor the unhappiness of sinners, can check our presumption; and we perish.

III. And Peter went into the court of the high priest, and sat with the servants. For the officers and servants had kindled a fire of coals in the midst of the court, for it was cold, and were set down together and warmed themselves; and Peter sat down among them and warmed himself.—Peter being admitted into the house, penetrated into the inward court and joined the inferior officers and servants, who were warming themselves at a fire which they had enkindled in the middle of it. He was aware that it

would be a crime in that house to acknowledge himself a disciple of Jesus; on the other hand, he thought he could never be so faithless as to renounce Jesus; his plan therefore was, in joining the others, to pass for one of them, resolving however, if he heard his Master calumniated, to keep silence, and not to take part in their blasphemies. How many every day are ruined by following a similar plan! We must be in the world, we must be of its parties, its amusements, its conversations, its pleasures: nevertheless we will not partake in its disorders; yet, neither would we be thought extraordinary or scrupulous, lest we should be ill-received; but there is an easy method, which is to let others say and do as they like, without our participating in the faults which they may commit. Thus if any one speaks impiously of God, of Jesus Christ, of his religion, and of his church; if another talks against faith, chastity, or decency, we will be silent, we will pay no attention to it, and so come off innocent. Such a mode of conduct is quite opposite to the gospel; can it then be innocent? but does it happen that people stop here? Ah! how many secret and public falls are the just punishment of

this silly and presumptuous rashness ! St. Peter fell ; how then shall we hope to stand ? For there will be always between him and us this difference ; rash and ill-advised as were his proceedings, the principal motive of them was his love for his Master ; whereas the motive of ours is the love of the world, of its riches, and of its pleasure.

SECOND POINT.

I. And the maid that kept the door beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man also was with Jesus, of Nazareth—then she saith to Peter, Art not thou one of this man's disciples? Thou also wert with Jesus of Galilee.—It was not at the door the maid spoke to him thus, but it was whilst he was sitting and warming himself with the servants. This door-keeper had some suspicion of the unknown person she had admitted, and as soon as she had fastened the door, she wished to know who he was. Accordingly she came into the court, and by the light of the fire easily discovered him. Having looked at him attentively, she said, *This man also was with Jesus*, and then interrogated the apostle himself, and

taxed him positively with being his disciple. We may imagine that at the moment the woman was speaking, every eye was turned upon Peter. Thunderstruck at this accusation which he did not expect, he had not time to deliberate or to recollect himself; he saw no resource but in infidelity and falsehood. He endeavoured to dissemble his embarrassment, and not to appear disconcerted; *and he denied before them all, saying, Woman, I know him not, neither understand I what thou sayest.*—This then, presumptuous apostle, is the result of thy fine protestations! Ah! great God, what are we when in punishment of our temerity, thou abandonest us to our weakness? Who shall dare to trust in himself, after such an example? What are we in comparison of what St. Peter was? And yet this disciple, so distinguished for his zeal and affection, behold! is now become an apostate, not at the sight of tribunals, torments, and death; but at the voice of a woman, of a servant-maid, before people who have no authority, who do nothing to intimidate, and from whom he could separate himself immediately, as he afterwards did. But thus unexpectedly taken by surprise, fear overpowers him, and he is

no longer himself. Whenever any passion whatever, as fear, love, ambition, anger, tyrannizes over us, it deprives the mind of its right reason; it magnifies objects, and so changes their nature, that when reason has again gained the upper hand, and grace has opened our eyes, we are astonished at the delusion. What must we conclude from this? That there is no security for us but in flight, humility, and prayer.

II. And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth.—This first denial of his Master, into which Peter had been hurried by surprise and terror, must have filled his heart with trouble. He determined to withdraw; he therefore quitted the inner court, and came into the porch. At that instant was heard the first crowing of the cock, which shewed that it was midnight. This was a warning which must have struck Peter, had he attended to it, and hastened his flight; but the prediction of our Lord was at that time very far from his thoughts. What then induced him to return into the court, and join a company, where

he had so fatally experienced his weakness? It was again the voice of a servant maid. He feared, no doubt, upon hearing her remark, that his retiring would be considered as a flight, and would discover at once both his attachment to Jesus and his infidelity. He hoped that his return would dispel all suspicion; and not to lose the good opinion of this despicable set, he came back to them again, convinced that they would not trouble themselves about him any more, and that the fault he had so unhappily committed would be the last. What could be more absurd than such a mode of reasoning! It is thus nevertheless that the devil detains in his fetters a soul, which after her first sin, repents and seeks to escape. It is thus he hurries her into a multitude of sins, the grievousness of which increases with their number.

III. And Peter stood and warmed himself. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.—We see here how a habit is formed, and how much a relapse increases the evil. To silence succeeded lying; here lying is supported

by perjury, and God permits, in punishment of his obstinate presumption, that his weakness should extend even to apostacy. Yes, he to whom God had revealed the divinity of his Son, dares to renounce his Master, and to take this same God to witness that he does not know him. Is it possible to fall from a higher point and into a deeper abyss! Such is the fatal progress of every sinner, who after his first sin, does not resolve to break through every obstacle to his avoiding the occasion of such sin in future.

IV. And about the space of one hour after, one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman, whose ear Peter cut off, confidently affirmed saying, Of a truth this man also was with him: for he is a Galilean. And he saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? And they that stood by, said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrayeth thee.—It should seem that Peter, after his second denial, was more at ease than after his first; at least we do not see him troubled, agitated, and preparing to go out, as the first time. Fatal effects of a relapse! Peter remained where he was, and still flattered

himself that he should be troubled no further, and that he should sin no more. But after an interval of about an hour, a third and more violent attack upon him began ; many again tax him with being a Galilean and a disciple of Jesus ; but when the cousin of Malchus recognizes having seen him in the garden, who can represent the terror of this already perjured apostle ! It is easy to foresee that his fall is inevitable. *Peter then denied again, and he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew a second time.*—What a rapid progress in the way of iniquity ! Behold here the word of the Saviour verified in all its circumstances, and the promise of the man annihilated in all its points ! Behold the strongest pillar of the apostolate thrown down and broken ! The noise of his fall has echoed through the church, and will be heard till the end of ages, to warn all men of their weakness, and of the continual need they have of the assistance of God. Behold the Rock on which the church was to be built, broken and crumbled into dust ; who can restore it, but he who foretold its downfall !

I condemn, O Jesus, the crime of the chief of thy apostles; but have I not the misfortune to imitate him, and perhaps to surpass him? When there is any risk to be run by declaring myself for justice, for truth, for true piety, have I courage to give testimony for thee? Have I at least the prudence to withdraw on such occasions? Ah! if the fall of Peter brings to my mind the multitude of my sins, may his return to thee, O my God, be also the model of my conversion! Amen.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

**ON ST. PETER'S REPENTANCE. MATT.
XXVI. 75. MARK XIV. 72. LUKE XXII.
61, 62.**

FIRST POINT.

I. And the Lord turned and looked on Peter.—Peter was yet speaking, when Jesus happened to be led across the

court, and turning towards his disciple, cast upon him a look of mercy. Their eyes met ; and what did Peter see in the eyes of his Master ! He saw meekness, compassion, and love, for a perfidious wretch, who deserved nothing but his hatred, indignation, and chastisements. Ah, sinner ! you believe that Jesus sees and hears you—cast then your eyes upon him ; see, when you desire to return to him, how he stretches out his arms to embrace you ! If you cannot read in his divine eyes how much he loves you, read it in his Gospel, and resist not when he tenderly invites you to return to him. At the same moment that a look from Jesus opened Peter's eyes, a heavenly flame was kindled in his heart, which begun to be hardened, and enlightened his mind, which seemed to have lost its light. Sinners, how often has divine grace solicited you to abandon the ways of iniquity, and to walk in the paths of virtue ! Follow then so sweet an attraction : reflect that your Saviour beholds you, and think only of this look of love, by corresponding with which you will ensure your eternal happiness. No doubt the world has its eyes upon you also ; but despise and make no account of its remarks,

The world looks upon you only to ruin you ; do you then only look on Jesus, and let your repentance be, like St. Peter's, true, sincere, and supernatural.

II. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, who said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. — O bitter remembrance, but which leads to a salutary remorse ! The word of Jesus then is fully verified by Peter's sad experience ! Yes, sinners and the reprobate, as well as saints, all find by experience that the word of Jesus is true ! He has said by his prophet, That there is no peace for the wicked ; have we not perhaps experienced this ourselves ? He has said that the wicked shall go into eternal torments, and the righteous into eternal life ; and his words will be verified. Alas ! we believe in his word, but our misfortune is that we lose sight of it, and forget it. Let us then remember it now, let us meditate upon it daily, and imprint it indelibly on our minds. Ah ! let us forget the maxims, the promises, the caresses of the world, which are nothing but falsehood and error ; and let us remember only the word of Jesus !

SECOND POINT.

I. And he went out and wept bitterly. Peter, now convinced by sad experience of his weakness, saw no safety but in flight. Though now thoroughly converted, he did not think of going to throw himself at his Master's feet to ask forgiveness of his crime, nor of remaining amongst the servants of Caiphas to retract his oaths, or repair the scandal he had given. Vain ideas, proper only to flatter pride and self-love: false pretexts of a deluded soul, which thinks herself converted, yet still loves to draw near to the objects which seduced her! We must begin by going away; the rest will come in due time. St. Peter did not deceive himself, he withdrew. Let us retire like him, if we wish to secure our conversion and our repentance. St. Peter, after his first denial, had meditated an escape; he attempted it, and had even half executed it; but he returned, he relapsed, and his last sins were much more grievous than the first. Whoever experiences a difficulty in quitting the occasion of his sin, whoever quits it reluctantly and by halves, may be assured that he is not yet converted;

soon will he be seen to fall again into a deeper abyss than before. St. Peter wished to withdraw after his first denial, he attempted it, but did not accomplish it; after his second denial he did not even think of going out, and he would have thought still less of it after the third; had not our Lord looked upon him in his mercy. But then this escape appeared to him as easy as it was indispensable, and he effected it on the spot without difficulty or hindrance. When a sinner is truly converted, there is no need of exhorting him to avoid the occasion of his sin, he flies it, he detests it, he abhors it.

II. Peter, penetrated with the most lively sorrow, waited only till he got out to give a free vent to his tears; as soon as the Lord looked at him, he went out; and as soon as he was got out, he began to weep. Alas! I have not yet begun to weep: so long that I have offended the Lord, so long that he has called to me to return to him, my tears have not yet given proof of my sorrow. The tears of St. Peter had God for their object, and the grievousness of the injury done to his holy name. Sinners sometimes rather lament the shame and the consequences of their falls than the

fall itself, and the offence of God. Finally, the bitter tears which St. Peter shed the moment he got out of the house of Caiphas, were only the beginning of those which he shed all the rest of his life. It is related of him, that whenever he heard the cock crow, he poured forth torrents of tears. How many objects might remind us of our offences, and constantly renew our sorrow, if we paid attention to them, and if our hearts were as penitent as St. Peters? And how could Peter cease to weep when he called to mind how mildly Jesus had forewarned him, how presumptuously he had rejected his advice, with what cowardice he had renounced him, and with what goodness Jesus looked at him at the very moment when he had been adding imprecations and perjury to treachery! We often say we cannot weep, we cannot pray mentally. Well, then, St. Peter here points out to us a source of tears, a subject for continual meditation and mental prayer; let us remember the graces we have received from God; let us call to mind our infidelities, the number and the grievousness of our sins, and the infinite mercy of an offended God, who was the first to seek,

us, to call us, to offer us pardon, and to comfort us.

THIRD POINT.

I. St. Peter after his repentance, is restored to all the privileges of his vocation. Peter, in the church of Jesus Christ, is the head of sinners, the head of penitents, and head notwithstanding of the apostles, of all pastors, and the vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth. Peter, who at the voice of a female door-keeper renounced his Master, is appointed by his Master door-keeper of heaven, and dispenser of his treasures.

II. St. Peter was faithful in fulfilling all the extent of his vocation. His sin did not prevent him from governing the church, from being, after Jesus Christ, its foundation-stone, and from cementing it with his blood. His very weakness redounded to the glory, and manifested the power of God; for whence could Peter draw his strength and constancy but from the Holy Spirit; he who before a maid of the high priest had renounced his Master during his life time, and almost under his eyes; and who, after the death of this Master, gives a glorious testimony in his favour.

before the high priest and his council? O adorable and amiable providence of God! O Jesus, how well hast thou shewn that thou camest for the salvation of sinners! Sinners, rejoice! Peter has sinned, has grievously and many times sinned, and he is restored to his Master's friendship, returns to his vocation, and faithfully corresponds with his high destiny. He is the head of sinners and the head of pastors; you have nothing then to fear, penitent sinners, either on the part of Jesus, after what he has done for Peter, or on the part of your pastors, who find your weakness, your perfidy, your iniquity in him who is their head, and who has taught them what mildness and compassion they ought to shew to sinners. Your repentance will re-establish you in grace, and will restore to you all the merits you had acquired before your sin. Notwithstanding your sin, you may be as high in the favour of your Master as you were before; you may glorify him as much, and arrive at as high a state of perfection as if you had not sinned. Your very sin may become to you a means and a motive for glorifying God still more, for making greater progress in virtue, and for maintaining yourself

in a degree of fervour, which perhaps if you had not sinned you might not have attained.

O great apostle, teach us like thee to profit of our weaknesses to redeem the time, and by our good works to make our calling and election sure! Obtain for us grace to bewail our sins, like thee, with bitter and continual tears; tears, excited by a generous repentance, accompanied with a holy confusion, and tempered by an humble confidence! Obtain for us grace to make satisfaction for our iniquities, and to weep over them, like thee, all the days of our lives! Amen.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE SECOND COUNCIL OF THE JEWS
HELD AT BREAK OF DAY, AT WHICH
JESUS APPEARED AND WAS JUDGED
WORTHY OF DEATH. MATT. XXVII. 1.
MARK XIII. 1. LUKE XXII. 60, 61.

FIRST POINT.

I. *As soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and scribes took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.. And they led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us.*
—This second council was assembled to ratify the first, and to give to the condemnation of Jesus a legal form, that it might have more weight with the people. At break of day, the high priests, Caiphas, whose year it was to exercise the functions of his office, and

Annas his father-in-law, assembled the council; at which assisted all the chief priests, or heads of the sacerdotal families, all the elders of the people, that is, the senators and magistrates, all the scribes, or doctors of the law—in a word, all those who had a voice in the council. As the first council was held at night, and immediately upon Jesus being led to the house of Caiphas, it is probable that many of its members were absent; but being apprized that Jesus had been taken up, and already condemned at a first council, all obeyed the summons of Caiphas, and hastened to repair to the second council, both those who had and who had not assisted at the first. Besides the advantage of being more numerous, this second council bore also the appearance of reflection, moderation, and wisdom. It should seem that they had not acted with precipitation, that they had given the party accused time to recollect himself; and that they only condemned him in consequence of his persisting in his evidence, and as they termed it, in his blasphemies. What wonder that a fickle and frivolous people, who had never relished the maxims of piety and penance which Jesus had announced to them, should

have been hurried away by so great an authority as that of all the chiefs and rulers of the nation?

II. This council was assembled *to put him to death*; that is, to deliver him up to Pilate with such charges against him as might determine the governors to condemn Jesus to death. It appears by the sequel, that in this second council it was agreed to confine these charges to the quality of king, which Jesus assumed. This quality was included in that of Christ, or Messiah, since the Messiah was to be the son of David and King of Israel. Caiphas had asked Jesus if he were the Christ, the Son of God; here he is not interrogated by Caiphas, but by the council, and probably by those who did not assist at the first meeting. They suppress what regarded his divine filiation, about which Pilate could not be interested, and they only question him respecting the quality of Christ, which included that of King; which latter quality they avoid mentioning expressly, the better to conceal their design. How active and how artful is impiety! But the Lord knows how to confound the prudence of the wicked, and the wisdom of the worldly wise.

III. In assembling this second council, God had his own views, all tending to the glory of his Son and the instruction of his church. The Jews did not wish to speak of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ, by the wisdom of his answer, forced them to it; and gave a second testimony of the divinity of his person more precise, and more formal than the first. Be thou for ever blessed, O divine Jesus! Be thy wisdom and thy love for us exalted for ever! In the midst of thy enemies thou art mindful of us, thou instructest us, and providest us with arms against the adversaries of thy divinity; who would wish to obscure, or rather entirely destroy thy glory, and deprive us of the consolation of having a divine Saviour, and of adoring in thee the Son of God, equal in all things to his Father, and being one God with him.

SECOND POINT.

I. *And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe.—I see the bottom of your hearts and your determination not to believe. I know why you question me, and that you look to my answer only for grounds of accusation*

whereon to condemn me, and deliver me up. You ask me to tell you if I am the Christ; I told it you in the temple, and you wanted to stone me; my miracles have told it you, and you calumniated them; the accomplishment of the prophecies has told it you, and you shut your eyes against the light; at this moment you continue to fulfil them, and are ignorant of it.

II. And if I also should question you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.— Only three days past I put many questions to you in the house of God concerning the baptism of John, concerning the son of David, and the rejecting of the corner-stone; and you would neither answer me, nor lay aside your hatred against me. If I should now question you as to what the prophets have said of the sufferings and humiliations, of the death and burial of the Messiah, you would persist in your malice and in your silence; you would not answer me, lest you should condemn yourselves, nor set me at liberty, lest you should miss the opportunity of satisfying your hatred. You are bent on my destruction, and you will not be contented till you shall have consummated your crime. Such are the terrible dispositions of an

obdurate heart, which will see or hear nothing, and will not reflect; which persists in giving no answer to any representations that are made: which rejects every thing rather than acknowledge its own error, condemn itself, abandon the ways of iniquity, and renounce the object of its passion.

III. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.—From these bonds that fetter me, from the cross to which you will fasten me, from the tomb which you will close over me and surround with guards; after you shall have done your worst against me, I shall go and seat myself on the throne of the Almighty, and take on the right hand of my Father the place which is my due. These words should have filled these wretches with consternation, and made them tremble lest they should embrue their hands in the blood of a God, by spilling that of a man, who in the midst of his fetters spoke to them with so much firmness and majesty, and whose unjust death could not fail to draw down upon them the severest vengeance of heaven. Alas! I ought myself to meditate well on these divine words. Yes, it is an article of my faith which I recite daily

in the creed ; this Jesus whom I offend by my sins, whom I serve with so much sluggishness and tepidity, whom I believe to be present in the Eucharist; and yet whom I have so little respect for, and receive with so much coldness and disgust—is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. Let then this thought re-kindle my fervour and encourage me to serve him with fidelity, confidence, and love, in the hopes of one day seeing him and reigning with him in his glory : for seated as he is at the right hand of his Father, he is all-powerful to protect and reward, as well as to chastise and destroy !

THIRD POINT.

I. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?—This conclusion was just, for these figurative expressions of being seated at the right hand of the power of God, could not be properly applied to a mere creature, however privileged or exalted. There is always an infinite difference between God and his creature, which makes it not allowable to say that the creature is seated on the

same throne with God, and at the right hand of his Omnipotence. Our Lord by his first answer led the Jews to this conclusion, in order that his quality of Son of God might not be separated from his quality of Messiah; and in order that the confession he was going to make, and which he was afterwards to seal with his blood, should apply equally to both.

II. *And he answered them, Ye say, that I am.*—Jesus then here confesses clearly that he is the Son of God in the most exact and rigorous sense, in the sense which made them say before, that he made himself equal to God. This sense is determined by the judgment pronounced against Jesus in the first council; for there Jesus having confessed that he was the Son of God, they considered this avowal as blasphemous, and in consequence adjudged him to be worthy of death. They therefore understand the term in its rigorous sense, as it has just been explained; and Jesus repeating here the same confession which he had made in the first council, takes also this term in the sense of the Jews: in a sense which would be blasphemous, if this quality did not belong to him. Thus the confession of our

Lord in this second council, draws an invincible strength from the first; and this second council which the Jews called together to render the condemnation of our Saviour more disgraceful, served only to add to his glory, to instruct his church, to comfort her, and to furnish her with arms against those false Christians; which acknowledging Jesus for the Messiah, will not admit his divinity, who is the essential and fundamental point of the Christian religion.

III. And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard it from his own mouth.—All this was but a farce invented by the Jewish council on purpose to deceive the people, to make the doctrine of Jesus pass for a corruption of the law; his miracles for impostures, and his quality of Messiah for a sacrilegious usurpation. Thus those who did not assist at the first council, joined with those who did assist at it; and all together confirmed the judgment which had been there passed. To attribute to one's self the quality of Son of God in the proper and natural sense, as it is here understood, is no doubt a blasphemy deserving of death, if such a claim is an usurpation;

but is it an usurpation in Jesus, who here claims it? Ah! this is what the council does not take the trouble to examine. They want no other testimony, nor do we. We have heard it from his mouth, and that is enough for us. If the beloved disciple tells us that the Word was God, and that the Word was made flesh; if this apostle, the vessel of election, tells us that he is above all, God blessed in all ages; if the most incredulous of his apostles calls him his Lord and his God; if his spouse, the church, assembled at Nicea, condemns as heretics those who do not acknowledge him to be true God; all these testimonies, which have been dictated by the Holy Spirit, are included in his own. We have heard it from his mouth, and we ask for nothing more.

Yes, O Jesus, this is reason enough for me to pay homage to you as to the supreme God, making but one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost! It is thus I shall consider thee during the whole course of thy Passion; nor shall thy humiliations, thy torments, or thy death, in any wise diminish my lively and immovable faith in thee! Grant, O Lord, that my love for thee may be still more lively than my faith! Amen.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

ON JESUS BEING DELIVERED UP TO PIMATE.
MATT. XXVII. 2. MARK XV. 1.
LUKE XXIII. 1. JOHN XVIII. 28.

FIRST POINT.

I. And the whole multitude of them arose; and when they had bound him, they led him away from Caiphas to the hall of judgment, and delivered him up to Pontius Pilate, the governor.—It was resolved then to lead Jesus in fetters to the palace of the Roman governor, and to impeach him not only as a violater of the law of Moses, but as a state-criminal, who called himself King of the Jews. Thus art thou fallen, O Jesus, into the hands of thy enemies; they drag thee along in triumph, as a prisoner; they exult in the victory they

have gained over thee! Those hands, which have worked so many wonders, are fettered and unable to move; thy whole person is at their discretion, and thou goest wherever they lead thee; they are thy masters and conquerors, and thou art vanquished, bound, and made captive. Yes, thou art vanquished, but it is by thy love; bound, but it is by our sins; made captive, but it is by obedience. Ah! when will thy love teach me to walk in thy footsteps?

II. Is it not enough, O Jesus, for thy enemies to take away thy life; but they must rob thee also of thy good name, and put thee to death as a criminal; after having loaded thee with ignominy, and made thee the outcast of the people? Ah! what will this people of Jerusalem think of thee, when they shall see thee bound and fettered at the feet of a Roman magistrate! This people, who have so often admired the wisdom of thy words and the magnificence of thy works, are about to consider thy miracles as illusions of the devil, and thy discourses as blasphemies against God; they are about to detest thee as the wickedest of men, the vilest impostor, the greatest criminal that ever appeared upon the earth. O Jesus,

God of all sanctity, in what a state dost thou consent to appear before the eyes of men! Ah! it is I who am the criminal, it is I who deserve every punishment, and to be the execration of all the world! It is my sins, O Jesus, thou hast taken upon thyself, in order to rid me of them, and to clothe me with thy righteousness! Teach me to acknowledge my prevarications, and to humble myself for them; to suffer both the pains of this life, and the contempt of men; in order to unite me to thyself, and to expiate through thy merits the sins thou seest in me!

III. He whom the council of the Jews drags along as a captive, he whom the Jewish people looks upon as a criminal; is he who has never committed sin, and whom God has made the victim of sin for us, that we may be righteous according to the righteousness of God. It is under this character of victim for our sins, that God sees his Son dragged from the council to the hall of Pilate; it is in quality of Lamb of God, that this adorable Son suffers himself to be led without complaining through the streets of Jerusalem, and offers himself a propitiation for our iniquities. O holy, pure, and spotless victim, how worthy

art thou of God, how worthy to take away the sins of the world! But, what excess of torments and ignomnies do not our sins bring upon thee! How great is thy love for us, to make thee undergo such base treatment! But what ought to be our love for thee, when we see thee suffer thus! It is with sentiments of the most lively gratitude, that, looking upon thee as the holy victim that is to be immolated for us; we are going to follow thee in this painful progress, and in all the other torments which thy love for us will make thee undergo.

SECOND POINT.

I. He is accompanied by guards and soldiers. These were the same who had treated him so cruelly during the night. Jesus walked bound and fettered in the midst of them. What ill treatment did he not experience from them during this long and painful march!

II. He is accompanied by his judges and all the council. How shameful to see judges turned accusers, and this multitude of priests, doctors, and magistrates, following the accused party, in order to bring fresh accusations

against him more slanderous than the former. What fury in their eyes, what hatred in their hearts, what hypocrisy in their demeanour, what secret joy in their souls—to see themselves masters of their prey, and in hopes they shall soon hold fast in their toils this formidable person, whose power they were unable to withstand, and whose virtues, doctrine, and miracles, were the continual reproach of their impiety and disorders!

III. He is accompanied by a multitude of the people. The people could not take part in what had passed during the night; but, in the morning, as soon as it was known that Jesus had been taken up and conducted to the governor's, it may be easily imagined what crowds flocked together from all parts of the city, and what a concourse Jesus met with on his progress. Alas! it is no longer Jesus teaching, explaining the law, casting out devils, healing the sick, raising the dead to life, that they run to see; it is Jesus vilified, despised, accused, and condemned; it is Jesus silent, passive, and defenceless. It is no longer a people hungering after the word of God, giving glory to God, and ravished with admiration; it is a people

led on by curiosity, hurried away by authority, and deceived by appearances ; it is a people who now see in Jesus a blasphemer instead of a prophet, a hypocrite instead of a saint, a man reprobated and abandoned by God instead of the Son of God. If amongst this people there are some of an upright heart, and a less fickle disposition, these look upon Jesus as a just man still ; but a just man wretched, feeble, abandoned to the rage of his enemies, and unable to stand his ground. All Israel disown their Messiah, their King, their Saviour, in the state of meekness and humiliation, in which he now appears ; the apostles themselves disown him ; they love him still, but they hope in him no longer. O holy Virgin, mother of Jesus, wert thou present at this spectacle ? Didst thou see thy Son dragged through the streets of Jerusalem as a criminal, who is going to be condemned to condign punishment ? Ah ! what a torment for thy heart ! But thy faith remained unshaken ; thou only wert privy to the mystery which was accomplishing ; and it may be said that the faith of the old and of the new covenant, was at that time locked up in thee alone !

THIRD POINT.

I. The Jews delivered up Jesus to Pilate, to satisfy their hatred. The greatest punishment among the Romans was crucifixion; the most lingering, most cruel, and most disgraceful punishment that was inflicted on malefactors. It was thus the Jews were desirous that Jesus should be put to death; every other punishment appeared too mild to them. It was for this reason they delivered Jesus to the Roman governor; it was on this they had deliberated in their assemblies, seeking how, by what means, under what pretext they might deliver him up to Pilate, to be put to death. They are now satisfied; Jesus is in his hands; all that remains is to induce the Roman governor to condemn him, and to succeed in this, neither lies, nor false interpretations, nor calumnies, nor threats, nor imprecations, will be spared. Ah! to what excess does the passion of hatred hurry those hearts that give way to it!

II. Jesus delivers himself up to satisfy his love. Jesus Christ has loved us, and delivered himself up for us, by offering himself to God as a sweet-smelling victim; Jesus Christ has loved his

church, and it is for us, for the church of which we are members, that Jesus delivered himself up. We may say then with the apostle, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me, and delivered himself up for me. O faith, O love, reign for ever in my mind, and in my heart! God delivers up Jesus to make reparation to his glory. *God hath not spared his own Son, but hath delivered him up for us all.* God, offended by sin, might, in reparation of his glory, have condemned sinful man to everlasting fire, as he condemned the rebel angels; but instead of us, he immolated to his justice his own Son, who was delivered up for our sins; and who by the sacrifice of his life, renders to God more glory than sin had robbed him of:

Ah! how great was thy love for us, O my God, to send thy Son to save us from perishing by an eternal death, to make us live an eternal life! And how great should be our love to thee, so good a God, to thee, so charitable a Saviour! Grant me grace, O Jesus, continually to bear in mind this love, this charity, that they may be impressed on every action of my life! Amen.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE MISERABLE DEATH OF JUDAS.
MATT. xxvii. 3—10.

FIRST POINT.

I. *Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself.*—What then was the object of Judas in betraying Jesus? What could he expect in delivering him up to those who had so long sought his destruction, but that they would condemn him to death as soon as they had him in their power? But no, passion hid from him these terrible consequences of his sin. A sort of hope that matters would not go to this extremity, or that his Master, whose power he knew would work some miracle in his own defence, quieted this traitor's conscience. But when he saw the consequences which ensued, and that all the odium of the

business would fall upon him, then he repented of what he had done. We are not afraid of enriching ourselves by every kind of unjust means; but when our injustice is exposed to the world, then we repent. A revengeful man fears not to go the greatest lengths to gratify his vengeance; but when he falls into the hands of justice, then he repents. The voluptuary fears not to addict himself to secret and infamous debaucheries; but when they are discovered and made public, then he repents and detests his crime. Such repentance comes too late; these consequences should have been foreseen; it was our duty to fear God and love his holy law. At least, if we repent, it should be for having offended him, for having sinned against heaven and in his sight: but not repent for fear of the consequences and out of human respects; such was the repentance of Judas.

II. And he brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.—This confession would be edifying, did not the sequel shew that it proceeded not from a heart, contrite and humbled before God, but from a proud spirit, angry

with himself for having been capable of so much baseness, and angry with the accomplices of his iniquity who had urged him to it. It is not so much to accuse himself that Judas speaks in this manner, as to upbraid the priests and magistrates that if he be guilty, they are as much and more so than he. But, traitor, what avail these bitter reproaches uttered against the partners of your crime? Fly them, seek God; and, prostrating yourself before him, acknowledge your sin and accuse no one but yourself. Why, sinful soul, when you make your confession to God at the feet of his minister, why break out into invectives against those who seduced you and led you into sin? Why so many complaints, so much discourse about the sins of others, which were perhaps the occasion of yours, and so little of that language of humility in which you ought to accuse yourself, and lay open your iniquity to the bottom? Are you not come to confess your own sins? or are you come to confess the sins of others? Such was the confession of Judas.

III. And they said to him, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the tem-

ple, and departed.—This proceeding was also of an equivalent nature. Repentance should detach us from the object of our passion, but in detaching our heart from the creature, it should turn it towards God; without that there is no true repentance. Ah! how many think themselves converted, who are only wearied and disgusted! This money so longed for and so prized, for which Judas committed so many crimes, stifled so many remorses, withstood so many reproaches, despised so many merciful invitations on the part of his Master; this money, which, before he possessed it, appeared to him a sum of consequence, now that he has got it, appears to him mean and contemptible. He is astonished that it could have tempted him, that he could have bartered his Master, his honour, his soul, his conscience, his rank, his apostleship, for such a paltry sum. He detests this accursed object of his passion, and can no longer endure it. He returns it, he throws it away, he abhors it. O illusion of a senseless passion! fascinated by a vile interest, an idle satisfaction, a momentary pleasure, we sacrifice every thing to obtain what we desire; and scarce have we obtained it, when disgust, satiety, shame, chagrin at

being disappointed, make us detest with horror what we had so ardently sought. Let us at least in these moments profit by our experience ; let us return to God, who alone can satisfy all our desires, and make us enjoy a solid and unalterable peace. A conversion without being converted to God, without self-condemnation, without detesting the object of our passion, is the conversion of Judas.

IV. And he went and hanged himself, and he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.—Judas, struck with horror at the blackness of his treason, sought to retire where he could indulge his gloomy reflections. Satan, whom he had admitted into his heart, had hid from him the enormity of his crime, while he urged him to commit it; but once committed, he placed it before his eyes in such glaring colours, that he could not endure the sight of it. Judas judged of God by himself, and measuring the goodness of God by his own, he thought that for him there could be no pardon. The sight of an angry and henceforth implacable God, would not perhaps have instigated him to take away his own life, at least we see that it has commonly no other effect upon sinners, but to confirm them in their im-

penitence and hardness of heart; but his conviction that he should now be abhorred by the whole world, led him to this excess of despair. He said like Cain, after the murder of the innocent Abel, *My iniquity is too great to obtain pardon*, and he added also like him, *Every one that findeth me shall slay me*. Judas saw no resource but in death, and he chose rather to take away his own life, than to drag it on in infamy. Alas! he might have devoted it to works of penance, his infamy would have redounded to his glory. God would have forgiven him, the church would have extolled him, heaven would have crowned him. Lord, my sins are infinitely great, and I acknowledge myself before thee to be many ways more guilty than Judas. If my conscience recalls them to my mind, and represents to me their enormity, their number, and their duration, I will bewail them with tears. But if the devils upbraid me with them to drive me to despair, I have but one answer: that I hope in thy word, that my hope is above my sins, and below thy mercies. If my sins have occasioned me some confusion, either from being publicly known, or from the declaration I have made of them myself to the minis-

ters of thy mercy, it is a salutary confusion; I receive it with thankfulness as a part of my penance, and as a means of avoiding the eternal confusion I have but too well deserved. My consolation in my misery is, that the greater my sins are, the more my hope redounds to thy honour. Great as they are, to despair in thee would be a still greater sin, and greater than them altogether; because thou art the Father of mercies, and also the God of all consolation.

SECOND POINT.

I. *And they said to him, What is that to us? See thou to that.*—What is that to you? It is nothing then to you what blood you are going to shed, provided you thereby gratify your hatred! But if it were the blood of a just man, of a prophet, of the Messiah and the Son of God? This you do not examine, about this you do not trouble yourselves, this is a matter indifferent to you, and which does not concern you. Ah! savages, it concerns you more than you imagine! You will be called to account for this divine blood which you are going to shed, as well as for all the innocent blood spilt from Abel, down to the day

when the vengeance of heaven will burst out visibly upon you; and even in this life, your nation proscribed and enslaved, your ravaged provinces, your capital reduced to ashes, your temple destroyed, your descendants become vagabonds, and scattered over the earth, will shew to all the universe, whether it concerned you or not to spill the blood of a God. Alas! O Lord, have not I myself spilt this sacred blood! Have I not profaned and trampled it under foot whenever I have offended thee, and have I not done it with the most stupid tranquillity, and the most cruel indifference? I said in my heart, I have sinned, and what bad consequences have ensued from it? I will sin again, and what harm will befall me? Wretch that I am! did I reflect that I was shedding thy blood, and that an eternity of torments is not a greater punishment than I deserve?

II. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.—Behold them here just as our Lord described them. The law only forbids to offer to the Lord, or in other words, to put into the treasury of the temple money which had been the

price of lewdness, or had come from the sale of an unclean animal ; but they extended the law to the present case. Thus they scrupled to put this money into the treasury of the temple, and they had not scrupled to draw it out from thence to purchase treason ; and buy the blood of a just man, whose only crime was that the splendour of his miracles and virtues, had excited their envy and hatred. Do we not imitate these hypocrites ? Does it not happen to us to be scrupulous to excess in exterior practices and observances of our own choice ; whilst we violate faith, justice, charity, and what is most essential in the law of God without remorse ?

III. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of blood, unto this day.— They determined, therefore, to buy with the thirty pieces of silver a field which belonged to a potter, and they dedicated it to the burial of strangers, who might die at Jerusalem. This field bore afterwards the name of Haceldama, that is, land of blood. The priests were interested in concealing the retraction of Judas, by which he declared that he had sinned and betrayed innocent blood ;

on the contrary it was for the glory of Jesus that this retraction should be well known; for it might be thought that a disciple who had the confidence of his Master, and the management of his money, would not have consented to deliver him up without having solid reasons for it, which the public could not know; but the field bought by the priests themselves, was an eternal monument of the innocence of Jesus. The name which the public gave to this field, shewed that they were informed with what money it was purchased, and why this money was returned. This name passing from mouth to mouth perpetuated the unsuspected testimony which Judas bore to the sanctity of his Master; and recorded at the same time the crime of the priests, by whom this blood was shed. Had this field been bought for any other use, the occasion why it was purchased might have been forgotten; but this field instructed not only the Jews amidst whom it was situated, but the strangers for whom it was destined; and whenever a stranger was buried there, the memory of the transaction could not fail to be renewed. O admirable wisdom of God! Thou knowest how to confound the wicked in their prudence;

and their counsels serve only to justify thy providence, and to execute thy designs.

IV. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.—Let us admire here how an event which appears unimportant in itself, is the accomplishment of a prophecy, which marks all the detail of what passed afterwards, and which was never fulfilled on any other occasion but this: a prophecy so remarkable as to be sufficient of itself to convert a well-intentioned Jew; it ought at least to fill the heart of a Christian with comfort and admiration.

Grant, O my God, that the Jews may come to see that they have executed without knowing it, not only what was ordained for them to do in the holy Scriptures, but also what was ordained to be announced to them by the prophets! Grant that when they see the accomplishment of the prophecies respecting the death of the Messiah, these may cease to be a stumbling-block in their way; and that they may the more easily

acknowledge the crime they have committed! Grant me at least the grace, O Lord, to practice in holiness of life a religion which the literal accomplishment of the prophecies, and the accumulation of so many other testimonies, so evidently prove! Amen.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

ON PILATE'S PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION WITH THE JEWS. LUKE XXIII.
2. JOHN XVIII. 28, 32.

FIRST POINT.

I. *Then led they Jesus from Caiphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be de-*

filed; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them.—We see here the example of a false devotion, fearing to be defiled by entering through necessity into a profane house; and not fearing to be defiled by suing for the death of a just and innocent man. It must be observed, that the passover which the Jews desired to eat was not the paschal lamb, which had already been eaten on the eve; but the other paschal victims which were immolated during the seven days of the solemnity, and particularly those which were to be immolated that day, which was the day of the Jewish passover.

II. We see here an example of false appearances. What did the frivolous people think, when they saw Jesus conducted as a criminal, condemned by the greatest and most enlightened personages in Jerusalem, and delivered up to the governor by the heads of the whole nation: what did they think, but that Jesus was guilty? But on the contrary, what did they think of their chiefs when they saw them, from a delicacy of conscience, refuse to go in with Jesus into the governor's house, that they might not be defiled, and might be fit to eat the passover? What holy personages!

What religious and regular men! O innocence oppressed! O profound hypocrisy! Let us learn to mistrust appearances, and not to be hasty in our judgments.

III. We see here the example of a proper condescension. Although Pilate despised both the religion and the observances of the Jews, he nevertheless respected their prejudices, and took the trouble to go out to speak to them. We may suppose that he addressed them from a balcony, which gave upon the place where the Jews were assembled. This condescension of Pilate is a lesson to the great, and to those who are in office to yield upon occasion to popular ideas and prejudices; and it teaches us also to respect a delicacy of conscience in others, and to accommodate ourselves thereto, rather than contradict and disquiet them.

SECOND POINT.

And he said, What accusation bring ye against this man? they answered and said unto him, if he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.—The question of Pilate was plain and equitable; but what pride and ill-

will in the answer of the Jews; they no doubt expected the question which Pilate put to them, and had prepared their answer: but as they were dissident of their cause, and feared the penetration and equity of the judge, they were desirous that Pilate should condemn Jesus upon their testimony alone, and without fuller inquiry; and they endeavoured to carry this point. It is thus that detractors and calumniators injure the character of their neighbour, and deliver him up to public hatred, without producing any fact of which they are certain. If he were not guilty, say they, we should not speak thus of him; all the world would not speak of him as they do. Bad reasoning this, and a bad proof. If all the world sometimes agrees to speak ill of a person, it is that all the world is led by the discourses of some, who have often no foundation for what they say but envy and malice; they forget to inquire with Pilate, what grounds they have for their accusations.

THIRD POINT.

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him and judge him according to your

law. The Jews answered him, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death. That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

I. The Jews could not put any one to death at this time, that is, during the festival of the passover. In one of their councils, they had indeed decided that Jesus should not be put to death during the festival, for fear of a tumult among the people; but now finding that circumstances, contrary to their expectations, were favourable to their design, they wish to hasten the death of Jesus; and they have recourse to Pilate for two reasons; first, not to be obliged to delay this business till after the festival days, which would have been subject to many inconveniences; secondly, that Jesus might be condemned to the cross, the most cruel and ignominious punishment inflicted by the Romans, and which was not in use among the Hebrews. The Jews then, being desirous that Jesus should be judged and condemned to be crucified without delay, were obliged to yield to the governor's will, and to produce their accusations.

II. We must never be tired of considering the divine and infallible cer-

tainty, with which Jesus foretold that he should die upon a cross. How many things was it not necessary to foresee for that? first, to foresee that the Jews, instead of causing him to be stoned, according to the law, as a blasphemer; should determine to deliver him up to the Gentiles, notwithstanding the numberless reasons which might dissuade them from it. This difficulty removed, another is started by the governor, which the Jews only overcome by acting contrary to their natural character; in spite of the opposition arising from their pride, and the danger of seeing Jesus acquitted. In the sequel, how many times did the crucifixion of Jesus appear not only to be doubtful, but to be quite given up! And yet it came to pass! Jesus foresaw all the obstacles, all the repugnance of the judge, and in the end his prevarication, and the triumph of his enemies. O eternal light, how infallible are thy predictions, and how much reason have we to confide in thy promises? It is not so with thy enemies; their mouths are given up to lies, to imposture, to calumny; but thou hast promised to confound them.

FOURTH POINT.

And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this man perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ a King.—With what face do men in their high station dare so to speak, not only before the Roman magistrate, but in presence of a whole people, who could bear witness to their falsehoods! As to the first accusation, where did they find Jesus stirring up the people? What popular tumult have they had to quell on his account? Has he not every where preached subordination, obedience, humility, meekness? did not the people always retire peaceably from his discourses, praising and blessing God? The second is still more abominable. But four days before, they had laid a snare for him, with regard to the obligation of paying tribute to Cæsar; they have not forgotten his answer, which covered them with confusion, and drew forth the admiration of their own emissaries. What wretches, who in so important a cause, dare to depose against the testimony of their own conscience, and the notoriety of a public fact! Be

comforted, disciples of Jesus, when you are treated like your Master; be like unto him, if your enemies are like his. The third accusation has something still more black and impious, if well considered. It has two parts. The first, that Jesus said he was a King, but this was a notorious falsehood; he never said it, nor ever assumed the manners, or affected the appearance of a King; on the contrary, he was all simplicity and submission; and the priests, who had spies every where, must have known that when in Galilee, the people wished to make him king, he had hid himself, and made his escape. It is true that royalty was annexed to the quality of Messiah; but this royalty was not of a nature to give umbrage to Cæsar, nor to disturb the present government, as they wished it to be understood. The second, that Jesus said he was the Christ, or the Messiah; but such an accusation expressed in these terms is an impiety, an apostacy, a blasphemy; for they do not say that Jesus falsely called himself the Messiah, but they simply accuse him of calling himself the Christ, the Messiah. Is then the Messiah a fable? Is there then no Messiah to be expected? The promises then made to

Abraham and David, are vain. The foundation and the end of the law of Moses, are idle fancies; the oracles of the prophets are but visions; religion only a political machine, and the expectation of Israel a popular prejudice: and the first man who dares to say he is the Messiah, is for this alone, and without further inquiry, deserving of death. What fools, what hypocrites, what impious wretches! It here appears how truly the Lord had told them, that they did not even believe in Moses. Such is the way of thinking of these men, so scrupulous as to outward appearances, and such rigid observers of the law in public. And a proof that this is really their opinion, is that they themselves in questioning the Messiah, never went beyond the simple avowal he made of his being the Messiah, the Son of God; and that upon this avowal alone they condemned him to death. Ah! no one knows the depth of impiety and irreligion which is to be found in those, who have at all times circulated the most atrocious calumnies against the church and its ministers. Was it known, their outcries would excite little attention; but they conceal it

under a specious outside, the more surely to deceive the people! It is for those who are the victims of calumny to suffer with Jesus, and for us, not to suffer ourselves to be led astray—God sees all, will reveal all, will judge all.

O Jesus, I acknowledge thee for the Christ, the Messiah! Apply to me, O my Saviour, the merits of thy Passion; grant that I may learn to bear slight wrongs patiently, seeing that thou dost not refuse to suffer great ones for the love of me! Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

ON PILATE INTERROGATING JESUS RESPECTING HIS ROYALTY. MATT. XXVII. 11. MARK XV. 2. LUKE XXIII. 3, 4. JOHN XVIII. 23—38.

FIRST POINT.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus; and Jesus stood before the governor. And he asked him saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?—Pilate being a man of sound judgment, saw well enough that the accusations of the Jews were vague and without proof; and that no evidence was brought forward to support them. But as he was assured that Jesus himself called himself King, this last point only, which appeared to be the foundation of all the rest, remained

to be examined into. He went in therefore, and summoned Jesus before him. He managed the business with address. He did not inform his prisoner of what he was accused; and the better to discover the truth, he examined him without the usual parade of judgment; which often either intimidates a criminal, or puts him on his guard. He said, to him, as by way of conversation, *Thou art the King of the Jews?* The reason of this prudent conduct is evident; but the reason of our Lord's answer to the governor, is not so evident. *Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?* Jesus was not ignorant of what had been told of Pilate; but he desired that Pilate should declare plainly himself, in what capacity he put the question to him; to give us to understand that if Pilate had only questioned him as an individual, and purely from a motive of curiosity, he would not have been favoured with an answer. The royalty of Jesus Christ essentially united to his quality of Messiah, was a mystery, which, until the Messiah had accomplished upon earth all the mysteries of man's redemption, was to be announced only to the children of

Israel. Thereby our Saviour observed himself, what he had recommended to his apostles; when he sent them to preach for the first time, not to go amongst the Gentiles, or amongst the Samaritans. Thereby he condemned also the impiety of the Jews, in carrying before the tribunal of a Pagan, an idolator, who did not acknowledge the God of Abraham, nor the oracles of the sacred Scriptures; the most sacred and important point of their whole religion, to wit, the ascertaining the Messiah, and the King of Israel; and in soliciting the decision of this Pagan to reject him, who professed himself to be this personage. A proceeding not only impious, but full of meanness; by which the synagogue completed its degradation. How great is Jesus even when in chains!

SECOND POINT.

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?—The first words of Pilate, shew with what contempt the Romans beheld the Jews; and prove how much the latter were in the wrong, to have re-

course to the Romans in such a cause. The rest of his answer shews, that he makes this examination in quality of judge, and a judge chosen by the nation and the high priests. After this necessary declaration, Jesus acquiesced in the orders of the providence of God his Father; and no longer refused to answer the Pagan judge respecting his royalty. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but my kingdom is not from hence.* If Pilate could not comprehend what was the kingdom of Jesus, he saw at least, that whatever it might be, it was not of a nature to give him any uneasiness. Jesus proved what he asserted. The condition in which he was, and the way in which he allowed himself to be treated, shewed nothing of a king of this world. This truth should allay the fears of all princes and nations, to whom the gospel is announced; a truth very important to those who have received the gospel, and who acknowledge Jesus for their King. Since we have the good fortune to be of this number, let us beware of establishing our peace and happiness in this world.

We have a king and a kingdom in another world, the riches of which are pure, immense, and eternal. We are in this world only to merit the possession of that. Let us follow our King; let us make use of this world, only to enable us to acquire the happiness of the other. Let us suffer in this world, that we may reign in the other; and let us often say, as well in the midst of our pleasures and satisfactions, as in our afflictions and humiliations, *My kingdom is not of this world.* Let us not be satisfied with saying so, let us prove it, like our divine Master, by our demeanour, our lives, and our actions.

THIRD POINT.

I. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.—Jesus was the Word of God, before his coming into this world. He came, he was made man, in order to be our King, in order to teach us the truth, and the way which leads to eternal life. Whoever loves the truth,

belongs to him, and does not resist his divine light. Whoever hates falsehood, and despises the transitory goods of this life, such a one listens to the voice of Jesus; he there finds truth, solid and eternal goods, such as his heart desires. How do we listen to the voice of Jesus? How are we disposed towards the truth? If we are for it, let us then declare ourselves for it; let us not blush to have Jesus for our King, to be Christians and Catholics; let us give testimony to the truth by our words and our works.

II. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?* this question probably was not serious on the part of Pilate. It was not put for the sake of information, but it was a kind of contempt, of unbelief, or by way of compassion, that he spoke thus of truth. He meant to say, that truth was nothing; that it was only an idea, a phantom, to which a wise man ought not to sacrifice his tranquillity and his life. This is a way of thinking but too commonly to be met with among worldlings, amongst the great and exalted in rank, among men of riches and pleasure, wholly solicitous for the goods of this world; they say in the same sense as Pilate, what is the life to come? What is the soul? What is salvation?

What is truth, that we should trouble ourselves about religious differences and the decisions of the church? But, truth is Jesus Christ himself, it is the immortal King of all ages, it is life eternal; to which we must sacrifice, when occasion requires it, goods, pleasures, repose, reputation, and life itself, otherwise we renounce Jesus Christ, and can only expect eternal death. O Jesus! who art the way, the truth, and the life, never suffer me to fall into this mortal indifference towards thee! Engrave in my heart the love of thy holy truth; grant that I may prefer it to all things else, and for its sake, despise all the goods of the earth, which are only lying vanities.

III. And when he had said this, he went out again, and said to the chief priests and the people, I find no fault in this man.—This declaration of Pilate was to our Saviour's enemies a thunderstroke, which should have overwhelmed them; but they recovered from the shock. It should have been to the people a great subject of joy; but they suffered themselves to be led astray. It was for Pilate a great proof of his discernment, and his equity; but he belied himself; thus all abandoned Je-

sus, and his predictions were fulfilled. Providence was pleased only to establish his innocence; and to direct that as his first betrayer had declared him just, his last judge should pronounce him innocent.

O innocent Lamb! O Saviour, fountain of all justice! I rejoice that thy innocence is acknowledged. The prophecies are cleared up, and it is now seen that it is only for the sins of men that thou art going to suffer, only for the salvation of thy sheep that thou givest thy life. Grant me grace to suffer with thee here, that I may reign with thee hereafter! Amen.

MEDITATION XXII.

ON THE SILENCE OF JESUS BEFORE PILATE. MATT. XXVII. 12—14. MARK XV. 3—5.

FIRST POINT.

I. And when Jesus was accused by the chief priests and the elders of many things, he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? and he answered him to never a word.

It is worthy of remark that our Saviour never gave an answer, but when it was question of his mission, of his quality of Christ or Messiah, of King, and of Son of God, which he wished to make known to mankind; and indeed it does not appear suitable

to the dignity of the Son of God, and the Sovereign Judge of the universe, to make answer to men respecting crimes which they had dared to impute to him. Moreover these new accusations were, like the first, without foundation, and without proof; and Pilate who had despised the first, and who had pronounced Jesus to be innocent, perceiving that the new informers were still more actuated by passion, should have put an end to the tumult; adhered to his first decision, carried it into execution, and set his prisoner at liberty; but this cowardly minister of justice began to fear the fury of the Jews for himself; he could have wished to protect innocence, and yet not displease his enemies; he could have wished that Jesus, by a powerful defence and vigorous replies, had assisted him to get out of his embarrassment; he could have wished that he had so defended himself, as to reduce his enemies to silence. Vain wishes of a feeble and languid authority! Apologies do not silence calumniators; and when a judge has once declared the innocence of the party accused, he can only stop the spirit of cabal by a show of firmness, and by intimidation.

II. This silence of Jesus was in order to expiate the sins we have committed by the tongue, our idle excuses, our false justifications, our impatience, our murmurs, our sallies of passion, when accusations are brought against us; and the true or false accusations by which we have unjustly, or maliciously mortified our neighbour, or tarnished his reputation. Let us examine how far we are guilty in all these points, and thank our Saviour for being pleased to suffer in silence so many calumnies, to expiate our offences.

III. The silence of Jesus was in order to set us an example, and merit for us grace to imitate it. Jesus was pleased to undergo all the trials to which we are exposed, in order to be our example and model in all things. Shall we be so sluggish as not to imitate him? He was pleased by each of his individual sufferings, to merit for us the graces which we may want in every situation, in order to excite our confidence; let us ask of him then by that profound silence which he observed in the midst of his enemies; grace to observe silence ourselves, and to imitate so great an example.

SECOND POINT.

I. And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.—The silence of Jesus was full of dignity, tranquillity, and meekness; it had nothing of meanness, or timidity; such as might be occasioned by an alarmed conscience, or the dread of a cruel punishment. It had nothing of a gloomy sullenness, such as anger and the desire of vengeance inspires. It was not haughty and insulting, the effect of pride, indignation, and contempt: it gave therefore no offence to Pilate, but he could not help admiring it. The heart of Jesus observed a silence still more admirable; he acquiesced in the orders of his Father, and delighted in their accomplishment; far from dreading torments, he desired them for our salvation; far from insulting his enemies, or being irritated against them, he loved them, and bewailed their blindness: such is the silence which Jesus proposes to our imitation; for it is not imitating Jesus so to observe silence, as to satisfy our passion still more, and make it more visible than words could express it.

II. The silence of Jesus was the more admirable from the importance of the occasion; for it was question of nothing less than death, and the death of the cross: this was the object of the accusations brought against Jesus; and, in an affair of this consequence, Jesus was silent. The Judge was favourable; he required only an answer from him to refute the calumny; he asked only a disclaimer; he himself urged the criminal to speak, to say a word; but Jesus persisted in silence with a constancy, a firmness, a majesty, which the Pagan judge could not sufficiently admire. The idea which the philosophers of Greece and Rome had given of their sage, according to them, King of the Universe, and which they never realised, had nothing so great and noble as what he saw with his own eyes. To be silent at so critical a juncture required something of a superior nature—something more than man.

III. The silence of Jesus formed a striking contrast with the tumultuous cries of his enemies. On the part of the prisoner, dignity, tranquillity, and meekness: on the part of his accusers, meanness, fury, and passion. These latter were, nevertheless, of the first distinc-

tion among the Jews; yet they vociferated tumultuously, like the lowest populace, and poured forth their accusations without order or proof, and with an eagerness and fury which alone was sufficient to prove their falsity. On the other hand, Jesus, in his fetters, appeared to enjoy a profound peace: superior to human events, he observed an humble and dignified silence, thus exactly answering to the portrait which the Prophet had drawn of him; comporting himself as if he had heard nothing, or as if he had nothing to bring forward in his own defence. The governor, disgusted with the clamours of the Jews, was never tired of contemplating him whom they had delivered up to him, and his admiration continually increased. How many things did this silence speak to Pilate! Alas! what should it not speak to my heart?

THIRD POINT.

Besides the reasons which we have for imitating the example of Jesus Christ in general, let us consider three particular reasons for imitating his silence.

I. Because the occasions of imitating

it are frequent; hardly a day passes in which this occasion does not offer itself, and often many times in the day we are blamed, we are chid, we are accused, we are criticised, we are rallied, we are piqued, we are contradicted; let us then call to mind the silence of Jesus, and if circumstances do not oblige us to speak, let us imitate it. This is our opportunity; and the more frequently this opportunity recurs, the more careful should we be to profit of it. What merits may we not acquire by so simple a practice! What graces may we not obtain! What a degree of perfection may we not arrive at! If, according to St. James, he is perfect who does not offend in words, is there any more secure means than to strive to imitate the silence of Jesus? If we neglect it, how many daily losses do we not sustain! of how many merits do we deprive ourselves, and how many sins do we commit!

II. Because this example of Jesus is the most easy to imitate. If we cannot act, speak, suffer like our Lord, we can at least be silent like him; we cannot here bring forward our weakness or incapacity as a pretext—we want neither strength nor talent to be silent. More-

over, the circumstances wherein he asks of us to be silent for love of him, are nothing like so important as those in which he observed silence for love of us. Our life is not in question ; those who offend us do not ask for our death ; our silence will not egg them on to our destruction ; they are rather of a disposition to be touched and edified by it, and to be led thereby to esteem us, and to leave us quiet. If we do not imitate our Lord in so easy a thing, in what then shall we imitate him ? And if we imitate him in nothing, how shall we rank ourselves in the number of his disciples, and by what right can we still pretend to have a share in his rewards ? Ah ! we are very faint-hearted, if we refuse to follow him in so easy a thing as keeping silence !

III. Because we have the same reasons as our Lord for keeping silence ; the dignity of a Christian to support, and good example to give ; sins to expiate, and graces to merit. Let us then regret the occasions we have lost of observing a silence so honourable, so useful, so necessary, and so easy ; and let us make a firm resolution not to lose them for the future.

Grant, O Lord, that I may open my

mouth, only to give testimony to thy truth! that I may be silent when it is not necessary to speak, and that I may adore, in that peace and recollection which silence gives, thy wise and just conduct towards me, amidst all the impieties of men! Amen.

MEDITATION XXIII.

ON JESUS BEING SENT FROM PILATE
TO HEROD, AND FROM HEROD TO
PILATE, LUKE XXIII. 5—12.

FIRST POINT.

I. *But the chief priests were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.*—The first artifice of calumny is to take a higher tone, and to become more clamorous.—The Jews perceiving that Pilate feared them on the one hand, and on the other ad-

mired the constancy of Jesus, and was convinced of his innocence, make greater efforts to intimidate this judge; they raise their voice, redouble their shouts, adding only words to their former accusations, instead of proofs, which they were unable to produce.—The second artifice of calumny is to attack the doctrine, when it dares not attack the moral character. It is no longer Jesus who stirs up the people, it is his doctrine. What is there new then in this doctrine capable of stirring up the people? For three years that Jesus has taught he has been watched, and pains have been taken to ensnare him; how comes it that his doctrine has only now been discovered to be seditious? And again, What maxim, what dogma is brought forward which tends to revolt? The third artifice is to represent the evil as general, and spread far and wide; but the more it is general, the more ought there to be witnesses of it. This seditious doctrine is every where disseminated, and nowhere is there any sedition. All is peaceable and orderly in the towns and villages where he appeared, whether in Galilee or Judea. Where then is the tumult, the disorder, the averred scandalous effect of his dan-

gerous doctrine? Impostors that ye are, all is quiet every where else; and if there is any tumult here, you only are the authors of it. *Throughout all Jewry.*

—These vague terms are employed, because of their inability to specify any one place in particular. They are high-sounding words, likely to make impression on a people not given to reflection, and to intimidate wary magistrates, naturally inclined to mistrust and suspicion. They are, in fine, accusations belied by the facts, by means of which, nevertheless, innocence is often borne down—when that shall happen, what consolation will not the example of Jesus afford!

II. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean? and as soon as he knew that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.—Herod, no doubt, was come to Jerusalem, there to celebrate the feast of the Passover, for he professed the Jewish religion. Pilate did not refer Jesus to Herod out of consideration for this prince, for they were at variance. He did not refer this decision to him as being his concern, for he had all the authority necessary to decide this

cause, of which he was judge without appeal. He referred it therefore to Herod only out of weakness, to get rid of it, and to avoid the necessity, either of acting against justice out of complaisance to the Jews, or of displeasing the Jews by supporting the side of justice; but is it not betraying it to support it in such a manner? Why expose to a new trial, to a new judge, to a doubtful issue, the cause of an accused person whom he has tried, has judged, has declared innocent? We love high stations on account of the honour which is attached to them, but we dislike the burden they bring along with them. We love justice, but we will not sacrifice to it our repose. We love the esteem of men more than virtue. We are more solicitous for the approbation of the great than attached to our duty. With such dispositions we are unworthy of the place we hold; and the occasion only is wanting to overthrow the most upright, most enlightened, best intentioned judge, and to make him prevaricate.

III. The people were present at all that passed. They saw and heard all in silence. They knew full well the falsehood of the accusations brought against Jesus. How then could they

hear so many calumnies without exclaiming, without murmuring, without testifying their indignation? When Pilate declared Jesus innocent, the people to whom his words were addressed, as much as to the priests, should have expressed their joy, and applauded the governor's equity and discernment: by so doing, they would have encouraged the judge, intimidated the calumniators, and borne testimony to acknowledged innocence; but fear kept them in silence. If they dared not speak, they should at least have withdrawn themselves, not to authorize by their presence the calumnies they heard; but curiosity got the better of duty. They wished to see the whole, they accompanied Jesus in his journey to Herod, and in his return to Pilate. They thought themselves blameless, as being only spectators, and did not imagine they could ever become actors. They became so nevertheless, and acted, not according to their own lights, but according to the passions of others, and contrary to the judgment of their own conscience; and they were brought at last to call for the death of Him whom they knew to be innocent. Should you be of the lower orders, without place or

authority, and should hear your pastors, your spiritual guides, whose innocence is known to you, calumniated ; if you cannot speak in their behalf, withdraw at least, grieve, pray, but listen not to the calumnies uttered against them ; this would be to make yourselves accomplices ; and before long, perhaps, you would become guilty of the injustices committed against them, by espousing the sentiments, and approving the violences of their enemies.

SECOND POINT.

I. And when Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad : for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him ; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.—Herod was glad ; but what joy could a prince, who was voluptuous even to cruelty, the ravisher of his brother's wife, and the murderer of John the Baptist, experience at the sight of Jesus ? He was merely glad to see an extraordinary man ; to satisfy his curiosity, without any retrospect on his own conduct, without any desire of profiting by this interview for his eternal salvation. The joy of Zacheus, when he received our

Saviour in his house, was very different; but indeed he had the happiness of knowing him; and Herod, though he saw him, knew him not. *He had long been desirous to see him.* What then had prevented him? It was in Galilee, in his own states that Jesus preached, and worked the great miracles which were every day reported to him: every one knew where Jesus was to be found; people flocked to him from all parts, even from the distant territory of Sidon. Did Herod take a single step to see him? He feared, no doubt, that he should disparage his royal dignity, and still more, that he should expose his reputation for wisdom, if he appeared to think like the people.

II. He hoped to see him work a miracle;—for his advantage and utility? No. Why then? For his vanity, for his curiosity; to subject the work of God to his examination, to his criticisms, to his censures. It was with a very different spirit that the sisters of Lazarus expected a miracle of Jesus Christ. They witnessed this miracle so great and so interesting for them; but Herod was not so favoured. Do not we resemble this impious king? Is it not with a childish and profane joy that

we keep the feasts and solemnities of the church? Are not our desires of repentance and salvation barren? Is our faith sufficiently firm and enlightened not to require and expect fresh miracles to confirm it?

III. Then he questioned him in many words.—The questions of Herod were conformable to his dispositions. He interrogates Jesus about matters of curiosity. He put these different questions to him to sound him, to penetrate into his character, to pass a judgment upon him, which might be a rule for the priests, the doctors, and the people, and which might do credit to his own wisdom and discernment. But his pretended wisdom was confounded. In vain did this wily fox, as our Saviour had called him, double and bestir himself, he was taken in his own snares, his wiles turned against himself; and far from penetrating into the interior of him whom he endeavoured to sound, he did not even comprehend his exterior silence, and treated as folly the eternal wisdom of God.

IV. But Jesus answered him nothing.—Not only Jesus made no answer to any of the questions put to him by Herod, but he even did not let him know

why he did not answer him. He did not inform him that his evil dispositions rendered him unworthy of a miracle, and even of an answer; he did not tell him that his curiosity, vanity, pride, presumption, and irreligion, which prompted these questions, were also the cause of his silence; he did not even reproach him with his crimes, his adultery, and the death of John the Baptist. Jesus observed an absolute silence; and notwithstanding all the artifices of Herod, he could get no answer from this divine Master. On the other hand, *the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him*; and to all this Jesus answered nothing. Kings of the earth, grandes of the world, tremble at this terrible silence of Jesus, which is a just, but severe punishment of your pride and presumption, of your irreligion and corruption of heart! Herod understood not this mystery of the wisdom and justice of God. He thought himself, as being a Jew, more enlightened than Pilate, and he shewed himself blinder than him. Pilate had admired the silence of Jesus as the effect of a virtue more than human, and Herod despised it as the effect of imbecility. Many are brought to this de-

gree of blindness. When amidst the first disorders of a licentious youth, they heard in their inmost consciences the reproaches of Jesus ; they had still a respect for religion ; but since their multiplied crimes have been punished by the silence of Jesus, they behold religion with contempt. Men become more vain, and fancy themselves more enlightened, the more they involve themselves in darkness.

THIRD POINT.

I. And Herod with his army set him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a white robe, and sent him again to Pilate.—Herod thought himself very wise in considering Jesus as a fool. The grandees of his kingdom, who had accompanied him to Jerusalem, failed not to applaud his discernment, and made a point of insulting with the wisdom of God, at all times unknown to the pride of human reason. They pitied the ignorance of the people, who had taken this man for a prophet, or even for the Messiah. What did they not say on this head? What railleries, what impieties! But again, what pride, what blindness, what madness in this prince

and his courtiers! It was not enough to treat Jesus with contempt, the judgment which the court passed upon him must be made public, and he must appear in a ridiculous garment to render him contemptible. The uncreated wisdom suffered himself to be clothed in it to condemn and reprobate for ever the wisdom and esteem of the world, and to shew us how we ought to value it. In this state Jesus was sent back to Pilate, and by this mutual deference, friendship was re-established between the King and the Roman magistrate. *And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity between themselves.*—They united together against God and his Christ, as says the Royal Prophet, and they were afterwards united in the temporal punishment which their crime received, being both banished by the Emperor into Gaul. But Jesus desired by his death to bring about a more holy union between Jew and Gentile, and to make of the two people but one flock under one Shepherd.

II. Jesus was treated with contempt by the priests and scribes. They had no reason to be content with Herod, who had not paid the slightest attention

to their accusations, the falsehood and secret motives of which were better known to him than to Pilate : but they were consoled when they saw Jesus come forth from the palace, clothed with the garb of ignominy and contempt. We may imagine that our divine Saviour was not spared during the whole time of his progress from the palace of Herod to that of Pilate. Every possible expression of contempt and mockery was uttered against him, accompanied with hooting, shouts of laughter, reproaches, affronts, and all the outrages that hatred and envy could devise. O Jesus, great master of patience and humility ! how comes it that I have not yet learnt, at thy school, to bear patiently and in silence a joke, a cutting expression, a word of contempt !

III. Jesus is contemned by the people. The humiliating spectacle which Jesus afforded was a great trial to them. Authority makes a great impression on the minds of the people ; but what strikes their senses, and is present to their eyes, makes a much greater. A king treats Jesus with contempt ; it is true he is not a great monarch ; he is a Tetrarch, whose states embrace only the fourth part of a kingdom ; it is true he is not

holy, his debaucheries are not unknown, nor his connexions with the enemies of religion ; it is true, that the nation over which he reigns is not much esteemed at Jerusalem ; but, in fine, he is a king, and his authority has its weight, even with a people that he does not rule over. But what completely overset all the ideas of the people at Jerusalem, was the state of humiliation in which Jesus appeared before them. The people could not see that disgracful robe without feeling some contempt for the wearer. He was no longer in their eyes the Prophet, the King, the Son of David, whom they had received with redoubled acclamations ; the Man powerful in word and work, who restored the sick to health, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead to life. He was now only a man of mean and contemptible appearance, and it was thus the people entered by degrees into the ideas of their chiefs. We soon shall see this people espouse their sentiments, second their fury, and become their accomplices in the guilt of Deicide. The transition is easy from contempt to hatred ; especially when prompted by persons whom we do not mistrust. We in these days are not in similar circumstances ; yet, in many

things do we not imitate this people? Whence comes the little respect, not to say contempt, which we have for Jesus in the Eucharist, unless from the obscure and hidden state in which he is placed, and from the bad example sometimes given us by the great ones of this world? It is, nevertheless, in this state to which love has reduced him, that we ought to pay him the most profound homage, to make amends for the outrages and slights he was pleased to suffer from the Jews for our sakes. Our faith in this adorable Sacrament, which heresy treats as an absurdity, and which has nothing striking in its outward appearance, ought to overwhelm us with reverence and love.

The august Sacrament of thy Altar, O Jesus, shall continually recal to my mind the indignities offered thee at the court of Herod, to which thou wast pleased to submit only to merit for us grace to bear like Christians those which may befall us! Grant me this grace, O divine Saviour! give me that wise foolishness, which is considered as folly only by those who are truly foolish; but which is true wisdom in thy eyes, and in the eyes of those whom thou art pleased to enlighten! Amen.

MEDITATION XXIV.

ON JESUS BEING COMPARED WITH BAR-RABBAS. MATT. XXVII. 15—20. MARK XV. 6—11. LUKE XXIII. 13—17. JOHN XVIII. 38, 39.

FIRST POINT.

I. But Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers of the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and behold, I having examined him before you, have found no fault in him touching those things whereof you accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.—So far the reasoning was good, and the proof convincing. Pilate knew very well what was passing in Judea,

Herod knew what passed in Galilee; and since neither of them found any appearance of revolt or sedition, the accusation is defamatory, and falls to the ground. The title of king, which Jesus acknowledges to be due to him, makes no disturbance in the state, has caused no stir among the people, and has given no uneasiness to Herod. That prince treated with contempt not only the culprit, but still more his accusers and the accusation brought against him. The two judges, who sat in judgment upon him, without having concerted together, and without any thing being brought forward by Jesus, or any one else in his defence; both having heard only his accusers, justify him, and declare him innocent. Calumniators, tremble: people, loaded with his kindness, witnesses of his virtues and his miracles, applaud: enlightened judge, Roman magistrate, discharge your duty, punish defamation, and do justice to innocence. But, alas! the contrary comes to pass. The calumniators are incensed, the people are silent, and the judge loses courage. God was pleased that the innocence of his Son should appear; but he requires his sacrifice, and all the passions of men concurred to bring it about. A

great example, and a great consolation for the disciples of Jesus !

II. I will therefore chastise him, and release him.—Chastise whom? Him you declare to be innocent, him whom you have acknowledged to be falsely accused! And why chastise him? because his virtues excites envy, because his conduct has been always irreproachable, because his enemies are numerous, and full of rancour! Is it a Roman who speaks thus? Is it a magistrate invested with all the authority of the emperors? Is it a judge? Is it a man? O Jesus! thou submittest to this perversion of justice, to be the model and consolation of thy servants! Yes, their innocence and integrity of conduct will be acknowledged; their fidelity and submission to the laws recognised; all that is said against them will be admitted to be a calumny, proceeding only from a jealous and envious cabal, which fears the effects of their virtue and zeal; and notwithstanding, the politicians of the world will conclude that it is necessary to chastise them, to humble and mortify them; in order to please and silence their enemies.

III. Pilate, weak throughout, wished to deliver Jesus, without discontenting

his enemies. He hoped, that by condemning him to be scourged, he should satisfy them; and avoid the crime of putting an innocent man to death. Such was the expedient he proposed, and declared he would adhere to; but Pilate was not aware of the progress of the passions, to what excess of weakness, condescension may degenerate, nor to what a pitch of insolence envy, if not restrained, may be carried. O too faint-hearted judge! you should at the first have made injustice tremble, and left it without hope, and boldly undertaken the defence of the just man. What clamours and tumult you would have prevented! What perplexity, and what crimes you would have escaped!

SECOND POINT.

I. *Now at that feast, the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.*—This was a law which the Jews had obtained from the emperors: thus the governor was under an obligation and necessity of delivering to the people, the prisoner they should ask for. The Jews, before they became subject to the Romans, had themselves observed this custom, in memory of

their deliverance from Egypt by the passage of the Red Sea, and from the sword of the destroying angel; who slaying the first-born child in all the houses of the Egyptians, passed by the houses of the Hebrews, because their doors were marked with the blood of the paschal lamb. We know that this deliverance of the Hebrews, was the figure of the spiritual deliverance of all mankind, by the blood of the Lamb shed for us. Let us admire how all this was here united at the death of our Lord, who is the true Lamb of God, and our eternal passover. Let us admire how, in the course of ages, and the revolutions of states, the celebration of this great event, which contains so great a mystery, falls here into the hands of a Gentile, a Pagan, an idolator: how is it he who, by the law of the masters of the world, delivers the prisoner, which is the memorial of the temporal deliverance of the Jews: how in fine both Jew and Gentile concur in the same solemnity, in the figure and in the reality, the fruits of which will be common to them both. O God! what order, what providence! Thy justice is above the mountains, and thy judgments are deep as the abyss.

II. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas, who was a robber, and who was cast into prison for a certain sedition made in the city, and who had committed murder in the insurrection.

—This Barabbas was publicly known for a seditious fellow, a murderer, and a thief. It was by a particular providence that Barabbas was now in prison, and it was not without a mystery, that he was going to be put in competition with Jesus, preferred to Jesus, and delivered by the death of Jesus. This notorious offender represented all sinners, and myself in particular. Alas! am not I like him a seditious rebel against God, and his laws? not content with rebelling against my Creator, I have drawn others into rebellion by giving scandal, and by bad example; perhaps even by solicitations, promises, and threats; I have praised, favoured, and encouraged my accomplices in revolt; and I persecuted those, who faithful to God, refused to join in it, and imitate me. Like him I am a murderer, who have brought death to my own soul, and perhaps to the soul of many. Like him, I am a thief, and have been guilty of robbing Almighty God; that is to say, I have used his gifts against

his leave ; I have abused them, in order to offend him ; I have usurped his glory by my pride, and by referring all things to myself ; and yet it is I, loaded with crimes as I am, that God is going to put in competition with his Son ; it is I, that he will prefer, that he will deliver ; it is his Son that he will immolate to his justice, in order to spare me ; and this adorable Son joyfully subscribes to this preference shewn me ; he gives himself up for my love to horrible torments, and to a most cruel death. Ah ! how is it possible to believe in such a mystery, and not to die with love ! O divine and ineffable love, inflame then my heart ; reign alone in my soul, take possession of it for time and eternity !

III. And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.—The people, according to custom, went up to the governor's palace ; and joining those who were already there, asked Pilate to grant them the liberty of a prisoner of their own choice, as he was used to do every year. This seemed to Pilate a favourable juncture. He eagerly seized this occasion, not doubting that its success would relieve him from his embarrassment. *Pilate says unto them, whom will*

ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?—Barabbas or Jesus, what a parallel! can we after that complain of odious comparisons that mortify our pride? Pilate reminded the people that Jesus was called Christ, and looked upon to be the Messiah, the more certainly to turn the scale in his favour. With the same intent he added, *I find no fault at all in this man; but ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover; will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?* The people, urged by the leaders of the conspiracy, were in no haste to answer. Pilate brought forward all that was in favour of Jesus; his innocence, his title of Messiah, his quality of King of the Jews; but in this, Pilate was guilty of the greatest injustice, he erred, he contradicted himself, he lost himself entirely. The people asked for the liberty of a criminal, and not of an innocent person; Jesus being innocent, had no need either of the festival of the passover, nor of the voice of the people, nor of the custom, to be released; he wanted only the equity of the judge. O judge, unworthy of the name, wouldest thou thus stamp ignominy on the forehead of the Messiah,

the King of Israel, by making him indebted for a disgraceful life to the indulgence of the people, and to the privilege of a law made in favour of a criminal! No, no, such a life is unworthy of Jesus Christ, the God of my heart; he will give for me the life which he has, and will resume another worthy of him, which he will hold of his Father, and of himself; and which he will one day communicate to me also, when I shall have spent the life I now have in his service. *For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him up for envy.* But if he knew it, it was his duty then to protect innocence against envy; to oppose, restrain, and punish the latter. If he knew it, the people knew it still better; now, if this same Pilate, who was not only independent of these pontiffs, but their superior, and empowered to overawe them, nevertheless dares not declare against them in favour of innocence oppressed; how can he hope that the people who depend upon them in so many ways, should have more courage than he has, and dare to do what he does not dare himself? if then the people become guilty, Pilate notwithstanding his protestations, is still more so than they.

THIRD POINT.

I. But when he was set down in the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of him.—Pilate was seated on his tribunal to receive the people's petition, and was making his proposals to them from thence, when he was interrupted by a message from his wife. This woman was one of those who, by their intercourse with the Jews, had been reclaimed from idolatry, and adored the true God: She was not ignorant of the expectations of Israel, and had often heard Jesus mentioned, as the King that was expected. Her husband had risen early to give audience to the chief priests; and it was perhaps after having learnt the object for which they came, that she fell asleep again, and had the alarming dream which she communicated to her husband. This dream could only come from God. It no doubt announced to her the misfortunes which threatened Pilate, and which afterwards befel him; and it disposed this pious spouse to embrace Christianity, at least, when she saw the accomplishment of

her dream. The advice was seasonable, and did not come too late, but Pilate knew not how to profit by it. This married couple are an example of terror to us. Christian wives ought only to enter into the business of their husbands to move them to clemency, to equity, to a respect for religion. Happy those who have wives of this description, and who listen to their advice! While all are silent in the cause of Jesus, and he has not one to speak for him, this woman undertakes his defence; and her voice alone reaches the judge's ears; a voice the most likely to touch him, and the best able to terrify him, if he goes astray from his duty. It is comforting to the female sex to see the women during the Passion, and after the resurrection of Jesus, more equitable, more compassionate, more active, and more courageous than the men, and even than the apostles themselves. Let then these two mysteries be their most affecting subjects of meditation.

II. Now the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude, that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.—As soon as the chief priests and magistrates saw that Pilate proposed to them

Jesus or Barabbas, they began to solicit the voices of the people in favour of the latter. The time which the governor employed in hearing the messenger from his wife and giving him an answer, was favourable to them, and they spent it in caballing. In an instant they spread themselves among the people, and like venomous serpents, insinuated themselves through all the ranks, to infect every mind with the foul poison of their jealousy and calumnies. What an employment for the judges of Israel, for the priests of the true God, for men destined by their state of life to support the interests of truth, justice, and charity! Let us mistrust this pharisaical zeal, let us fly and detest it. It is easy to know it by the jealousy which actuates it, and which utters nothing but insults, slanders, and maledictions.

III. Let us reflect how easily the priests and magistrates found means to seduce the people; how easily they persuaded them to enter into their views, into their sentiments of hatred and fury. Not only did they persuade them to ask that Barabbas should be released in preference to Jesus, but also that Jesus should be put to death, that he should be destroyed and exterminated;

and not to withdraw till their petition should be granted. It is only against Jesus Christ, it is only against his disciples that such changes of opinion, such an obstinate fury has appeared. Unhappy people! see to what you are brought by your neglecting to profit by the lessons of your Saviour, by your complaisance in listening to masters whom you despised in the beginning; whose envy and malignity you were conscious of, and whose sentiments you now espouse in order to consummate a crime, which they could not have accomplished without you.

Alas! how often have I had the misfortune to prefer the world and the devil to thee, O Jesus! Ah! how great has been my blindness, and how great should be my indignation against myself! Bring back to thee, O God, a heart which should never have gone astray from thee, and never suffer it to put thee in the balance with the creature! Amen.

MEDITATION XXV.

**ON THE PEOPLE ASKING FOR BARABBAS
TO BE RELEASED, AND JESUS TO BE
CRUCIFIED. MATT. XXVII. 21—23.
MARK XV. 12—14. LUKE XXIII. 18—
23. JOHN XVIII. 40.**

FIRST POINT.

I. And the governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the two will ye that I release unto you? And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. —Let us consider four circumstances of the preference here shewn to Barabbas, so senseless on the part of the people, and so humbling for Jesus. 1. The difference of persons. Barabbas was a seditious man, a murderer, and a robber; Jesus was the author of life, by

excellence, the just and the holy. If the people had not so perfect a knowledge of him, at least they knew that he had been delivered up out of envy; that nothing was brought against him that had the least appearance of probability; that his life was a series of virtues and miracles; that he had been always considered as a prophet, and that they had themselves received him in triumph but six days before, as the son of David and the expected Messiah. 2. The tumultuous behaviour of the people. It was not a quiet choice that was made, it is not timid voices that are heard, with some appearance of embarrassment, uneasiness, or human respects; but loud and seditious shouts, the voice of passion and fury. 3. Their unanimity of opinion. *And they all cried out at once.* All this great multitude is in unison together: all vociferated with one accord, only one wish is heard, only one suit preferred, without any difference or disagreement. 4. The hatred which prompted this preference. There was no partiality for Barabbas; any one else but Jesus that had been set up against him, would have been preferred to him; but they hated Jesus, and were bent on his destruction. Hence the people went

beyond their rights, they usurped a privilege they were not entitled to; not content with soliciting the release of Barabbas, they asked that Jesus should be put to death. What versatility, what blindness, what phrensy! What were thy sentiments, O divine Jesus, for this ungrateful and perfidious people? Sentiments of compassion, of zeal, of the most ardent charity; the same sentiments with which thou hast inspired thy martyrs, who like thee and for thy sake, became the object of public hatred and execration; the same sentiments with which thou inspirlest thy faithful servants, when envy, licentiousness, or heresy, raise their voice against them and excite the clamour of a deluded people, who blindly wish and call for their ruin and extermination.

II. This preference is every day renewed by four sorts of persons. 1. By the impious, who prefer the false glimmerings of a blind reason to all the revelation of Jesus Christ, and to the clear light of the gospel. 2. By heretics, who prefer an innovator, a rebel, against the church to him, whom Jesus Christ has appointed his vicar upon earth, and to the lawful pastors of the church, whom Jesus Christ has promised

to be with till the consummation of the world. 3. By worldlings, who prefer the world to Jesus Christ, and the laws of the world to those of the gospel. 4. By sinners, who prefer their passions, their pleasure, their satisfaction to Jesus Christ. All these cry out with one accord, *Away with this man.* It is not that they love that to which they give the preference. The infidel feels the weakness of his reasoning, and detests in his heart the abominations of his blind guides, although he follows them. The heretic knows the error of his sect, and the disgraceful conduct of its leaders. The worldling is never weary of lamenting the injustice of the world, which he has chosen for his master, its caprices, its corruption, and its perfidy. The sinner complains without ceasing of the tyranny of the passions which enslave him, and of the rebellion of the flesh which he is unwilling to vanquish and subdue: all nevertheless persist in the senseless choice they have made, and they persist in it from hatred to Jesus. They hate the just and the Holy One, they hate the sanctity and purity of his laws, his poverty and detachment from creatures, his humility and love of suffering. They love a life

unjust and sensual, tumultuous and perishable, and they hate the author of a life holy in this world, and glorious, delightful, and eternal in the other. O imprudent choice! O senseless preference! Can I have been guilty of such a madness, and can I again fall into it! Strengthen me divine Jesus! I prefer thy word, and the simplicity of my faith to all the wisdom of men; I prefer thy sanctity, thy mortification, thy humiliation, and sufferings, to all the honours and all the pleasures of the world!

SECOND POINT.

I. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto the King of the Jews, who is called Christ?—These words of Pilate shew the trouble he was thrown into by the first answer of the Jews, which was what he did not expect. He sees his measures disconcerted, his hopes vanished; he is quite at a nonplus; he does not know what to decide upon. He consults the will of those who ought to be obedient to his; to decide the fate of a prisoner whom he acknowledges to be innocent, he takes

advice of the adverse party, of his accusers, and submits to be dictated to by those to whom he ought to give the law. He respects the name of Christ and of King; God would have it so for the glory of his Son; but this unworthy judge by his weakness betrays these august names himself, and the people will not respect them. Ah! Pilate, you know not what to do with Jesus, give him to me, and I shall know what to do with him. But no, I do not want you to give him me; his Father has given him to me, and he has also given himself to me. What then shall I do with Jesus? I will offer him daily to God as a victim of propitiation for my sins; I will make him the mediator of my reconciliation with God. By him I will thank God for the favours which I have received from him, and in his name I will ask for all the graces I stand in need of. He shall be the delight of my heart, my meat and drink, the consolation of my exile, the comfort and happiness of my life, the model of all my actions. He shall be my love, my hope, and my salvation, my Saviour, my God, and my all. What shall I do with my King? Ah! on that head I will consult only my duty, and not the wishes of men,

nor the customs of the world. I will pay him the most profound homage; he shall reign over me, over my senses, over all the powers of my soul; he shall reign, as much as I am able, over all that depend on me; and I will extend his reign as far I can. *He is called Christ*, and I am called Christian. I belong to him by all manner of titles; I will follow him, I will imitate him, I will not forsake him, till he gives me, as he has promised, a place with him in the abode of his glory.

II. They all say unto him a second time, Let him be crucified.—Behold at length the decisive sentence, so much desired by the leaders of the people, pre-ordained by the eternal Father before all ages, announced by the prophets, pointed out by Jesus Christ from the beginning of his preaching; and clearly foretold by him when he set out for Jerusalem, an event which at that time appeared so unlikely, that the apostles could not comprehend what he said. Behold at length this sentence pronounced by the whole nation, headed by its chiefs, and demanding with loud shouts that Jesus its Messiah and its King should be crucified. Who would ever have thought that the

business would come to this! Here however it is come and will remain. In vain will Pilate wind about and put every artifice in motion, the sentence is pronounced, and will be executed, Jesus will be crucified. But if Christ must be crucified, must not the Christian be crucified also, in order to be like his divine Master, and to reign with him! *For those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences.* I have then to pronounce against myself this sentence of salvation. My body murmurs, flies labour, seeks for rest; *let it be crucified.* My flesh rebels, concupiscence prevails, vices shew themselves and wish to reign; *let it be crucified.* A disorderly sentiment of love, of pride, of hatred, of revenge, of impatience arises in my heart; *let it be crucified.* Persecution assaults me, calumny runs me down, sickness overwhelms me; I will face all my enemies, and will cry out to each of them, here is he whom you seek, *crucify him, crucify him;* it is for this that I was born, it is for this that I am a Christian, in this consists my glory and happiness; since it is thus only I can imitate my Saviour, and merit to reign eternally with him. Ah! how happy

should I be if I were truly crucified to the world and to myself; then should I be a Christian indeed, and should truly belong to Jesus Christ.

THIRD POINT.

I. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him and let him go.—Let us observe here, 1. The increasing weakness of Pilate. He had obliged the enemies of Jesus to be silent, and thereby tacitly to avow his innocence: the crimes of Barabbas are grievous, notorious, and clearly proved; but against Jesus no evidence is produced, nothing is brought forward but vague charges without foundation, without proof, and without witnesses. Nevertheless, in spite of such clear proofs of his innocence, Pilate resorts to the first expedient he had proposed, to chastise Jesus and dismiss him. He thereby relapses into his first contradiction of chastising an innocent person. He proposes this and executes it, without being sure that this will satisfy the people. He does not take notice that, scourging being a punishment commonly

inflicted on those who were condemned to the cross, to inflict it upon Jesus was to prepare him for the cross, and not to deliver him from it. In fine, Pilate betrays himself, and weakens the testimony which he bore to the innocence of Jesus; for at first he had said that he found no guilt in him; now he restricts his testimony by saying, that he finds nothing in him worthy of death: and what then does he find in him that deserves punishment? Let us observe, 2. the innocence of Jesus. *What evil hath he done!* Ah! rather what good has he not done! Has he not passed his whole life in preaching, in teaching, in giving edification, in relieving the distressed, and curing all disorders? Who ever applied to him and met with a repulse? *What evil then hath he done?* By his zeal, by his virtues, by his miracles, he has gained the love, the veneration, the confidence of the people; he has merited their esteem, and they could not withhold their applause.—This is his crime, this is what has filled with jealousy the hearts of his enemies, what has made them leave no stone unturned to cry him down, invent calumnies to make the people change their opinion, and turn their rage against him. Let us

not reckon then upon our innocence before the tribunal of men, let us expect no other return in this world than what Jesus Christ met with; but let this thought, instead of slackening our zeal, encourage us, and let not the ingratitude of men prevent us from devoting ourselves to their service, and for their salvation.

3. Let us observe the mystery of the innocence of Jesus.—Jesus was innocent, innocence and sanctity itself; but we were sinners. He took upon himself our sins, God had laid upon him all our iniquities, he alone was able to bear them, to expiate them, to wash them away, and merit for us the grace of a perfect reconciliation with God. This is the mystery hidden in God, which the prophets have announced, which the apostles have explained to us, which the princes of this world have not known, and which all the wisdom of the philosophers would never have devised, as a means to reconcile the justice and mercy of God—a mystery which philosophy is still unable to comprehend, without submitting the weak glimmerings of reason to the heavenly light of faith and of the Gospel. Now for us to whom this mystery is known, it is

our duty to enter into it with Jesus Christ, to unite ourselves to him, to suffer with him in silence and peace, injustice, calumnies, insults, torments, and death. Let us take care then not to murmur and cry out, But what evil have I done? Let us answer—And what evil hath Jesus done! Though our innocence may seem evident to men, let us reflect that we are sinners before God; that all the sufferings in this world are nothing in comparison of what we have deserved; that but for Jesus Christ we should suffer torments, and remain in our sins; that we are too happy, and too much honoured, to be able to partake at this price in the redemption of Jesus Christ, in order afterwards to partake of his glory in heaven. Ah, what gratitude do we not owe him! His love for us has subjected him to so many torments, will not our love for him support us under those we have deserved?

II. And they were instant, with loud voices, crying, Crucify him, crucify him; and the voices of them and the chief priests prevailed.—O senseless cries of a mad and infuriated people, the wisdom of God will make use of you for the glory of God and our redemption; you will

be succeeded by cries of salutation and benediction of the church triumphant in heaven, and the church militant on earth! Soon shall more than one hundred thousand Israelites, delivered out of tribulation, and signed with the cross on their foreheads, and an innumerable multitude from all the nations in the earth, unite with the choirs of angels in singing eternally the praises of God, and of the Lamb that was slain for their salvation.

I join my voice, O my Saviour, to that of thy church, to sing thy cross, thy love, thy triumph, and thy glory; till delivered from the tribulation of this life, after having been crucified therein with thee, I may join with thy saints and angels in praising and blessing thee for all eternity. Amen.

MEDITATION XXVI.

ON PILATE'S PREVARICATION. MATT.
 xxvii. 24—26. MARK xv. 17. LUKE
 xxiii. 24, 25.

FIRST POINT.

I. And when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see you to it.—Whether Pilate borrowed this ceremony from the Jews, or that it was in use among the Gentiles, it is evident with what view he washes his hands. This action justifies Jesus, but it does not justify Pilate. This judge publicly declares the perfect innocence of Jesus. He does not say of him, as lately, that he finds nothing in him worthy of death, nor as before, that he finds no crime in him; but he gives him

absolutely, and without restriction, the name of the Just, which expresses not only his innocence, but his sanctity, and the whole assemblage of his virtues. It was by this title that Pilate's wife had designated him; and he himself, after what he had seen, could not refuse him this testimony. He gives it before all the people, and accompanies it with a ceremony fitted to make impression on the people, and to perpetuate his testimony from generation to generation. Let us here admire the Providence of God, and rejoice in the glory which hence results to the name of Jesus. By this same action Pilate meant to declare, that he was exempt from the crime of shedding the blood of the Just; but in this he deceived himself strangely. The ceremony he made use of could not have that meaning, because in so doing, he does not detest or make reparation for the past, and immediately afterwards he does worse, by giving the necessary orders himself for spilling this innocent blood. How after this can he think himself innocent? Does he not see, that the testimony he gives of Jesus, notwithstanding the ceremony with which he accompanies it, turns wholly against himself! Alas! how many sin-

ners blind themselves thus! Let us apply what we have been saying to the confession which is made before communion; let us apply it to the taking of holy water to purify ourselves when we enter into a church: thereby it is true we bear testimony to the divinity of the Eucharist, and the sanctity of the house of God; but are we washed from our sins, and do we recover our innocence? Does not this testimony which we bear turn against ourselves?

II. *I am innocent*, says Pilate; *see you to it*.—No doubt the Jews will see to it; but you, Pilate, will not you also have to answer for the blood of this just man? They are guilty of wishing the death of Jesus, whom they had more time to know than you had, and of being so furiously bent upon it; they are guilty of urging you, of pressing you, of offering a sort of violence to you, and reducing you almost to a necessity of spilling innocent blood: but are not you very criminal to grant them what you know to be unjust, and what you are at liberty to refuse them? You yield to their importunity, you minister to their desires, you lend your authority to consummate their crime, notwithstanding the reproaches of your con-

science, your own sagacious discernment, and the counsels of a virtuous spouse; and you still flatter yourself that you are innocent! Let us reflect upon ourselves.—How many among us call or believe themselves innocent, who are perhaps more guilty than Pilate himself! How ingenious are we in throwing the blame of our own faults upon others, and in pronouncing in favour of our innocence! If we give way to impatience, anger, hatred, detraction, and injurious words, do we ever acknowledge ourselves in the wrong? Have not others always been the occasion of it? As if virtue could ever be practised but when such occasions offer! Are not the greatest crimes excused in the same manner? Injustice, theft, debauchery, forgetfulness of God, indevotion, irreligion, blasphemy, neglect of every duty, calumny, revenge, who is it that condemns himself in the midst of all these crimes, and does not seek to excuse his guilt? The blame is thrown on the world, on bad example, on custom, on the passions, on providence, on God himself. After this the sinner lives on without remorse, or, if he does not formally declare himself innocent, he lives at least as unconcerned as if he

were so. But will God judge in this manner? Let us then forestall his judgment by judging ourselves, and persuading ourselves that the crimes of others do not efface ours. Ah! how far am I, O my God, from being innocent! every one of my sins makes me guilty of all the blood of Jesus Christ, since it was shed only to wash them away, and that it is since he shed it that I have had the misfortune to sin.

SECOND POINT.

I. *Then answered all the people and said, His blood be upon us and on our children.*—In what spirit did the Jews utter these words? In a spirit of phrenzy and impiety.—By these words the Jews devoted themselves to all the rigours of the divine vengeance. Provided Jesus be put to death, they took upon themselves all the consequences, all the punishments which this death might draw down upon them; they consented to run all risks, and as far as in them lay, they exonerated the Judge, who was trembling for himself.—What fury! what phrensy! A Pagan judge trembles when he is going to condemn Jesus; he fears to draw down upon himself the wrath

of heaven by so unjust a sentence: and the Jews who adore the true God, in order to obtain this unjust sentence, brave the danger, boldly offer their heads, and with themselves devote their children and descendants for ever. Do these impious wretches fancy then that there is no God in heaven to punish them? But, for seventeen centuries past, the whole world sees with terror this people wandering and dispersed over the earth, bearing the marks of their reprobation, and making it known every where that they are reduced to this miserable state, for having put to death the Author of Life, the Messiah, and the Son of God. The Jews, such as we have seen them for so many centuries past, are a living and unanswerable proof of the truth of the Christian religion. They ought also to serve as an example to such libertines as are found in Christendom, since these are free thinkers only through their boldness in blaspheming against Jesus Christ, in braving all his threats, in exposing themselves to the consequences of profaning his blood, and in risking the dangers of eternity. Let them cast their eyes upon the Jews: they also were free thinkers. But when they look to their posterity,

let them comprehend that God will not be mocked with impunity, and that the consequences of provoking his anger are speedily felt.

II. With what sentiments ought *we* to repeat these words? With sentiments of a lively faith, of a profound respect, of an ardent love and entire confidence. O divine and adorable blood, spilt for my salvation, fall upon me to wash me, to purify me, to sanctify me! At my birth into this world, thy church, O Jesus, received me in her arms! She marked me with thy precious blood, and enrolled me in the number of her children! As soon as I had the misfortune to sully the robe of innocence, with which she had clothed me at my baptism, I found in this precious blood a salutary bath, which took away all the stains of my soul; and as often as I have had recourse to it, its divine and inexhaustible virtue purifies me more and more. This is not all, O my amiable Saviour! thou wert pleased that this adorable blood should flow every day for me, and before my eyes, upon thy altar, that I should offer it up in sacrifice to thy Father for my sins! This is not yet all: thou hast enjoined me to drink it, to feed upon it, to let it

flow through my veins, that I may live only by thy life, that I may be animated only by thy Spirit, and entirely transformed into thee. O ineffable charity, render me worthy of so much kindness; teach me to employ it for thy glory and for my salvation! Adorable blood, fall upon me and mine, fall upon us all to save us, upon infidels to touch their hearts, upon heretics to reclaim them, upon Pagans to enlighten them, upon the Jews to convert them; that being all united together in the same faith and hope, we may reign with you and by you in the same charity, which will endure for ever and ever!

THIRD POINT.

I. Pilate therefore willing to content the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required: and he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they desired; but he delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.—How was Pilate led to this excess of injustice and prevarication? It was that he vainly flattered himself that he should be able to conciliate within himself two opposite inclinations—one to save Jesus, the

other to content the people. Let us consider then in Pilate, 1st, his desire to deliver Jesus. This desire was sincere, nay ardent and earnest; it was just and of strict obligation, this he was sensible of: it was, moreover, easy of execution; the thing depended wholly upon himself, and had he executed it with firmness in the beginning, the people would have applauded him. Why then did he not do it? It was because, with this desire of doing his duty, he had another which was in opposition to his duty; and this was, 2dly, the desire of contending the people. Pilate, in the beginning, wished to conciliate the chiefs; in the mean time, the chiefs gained over the people, and then Pilate thought that he ought to satisfy the people. He flattered himself, that with patience and contrivance he should manage to conciliate together the interests of Jesus and of his enemies, of innocence, of cabal, of duty, and of complaisance. Ah! what an error! And what did he not to bring it about? to what meanness did he not descend? What violence did he not offer to his disposition, naturally haughty, arrogant, and inflexible? How often did he not forget what he owed to himself

and to the majesty of the Roman empire? Let us consider, 3dly, the success of his efforts. All ended in submitting to the will of the people. The less firmness the judge shewed, the more the people became mutinous; the more mildly he addressed them, the greater uproar they made; so that the judge was constrained to abandon Jesus to the people's pleasure, to be scourged and crucified; and in spite of his own better knowledge and remorse of conscience, and of the counsels of his wife, to give way to an excess of injustice and cruelty, at which in the beginning he would have shuddered, and of which he would have thought himself incapable. The abridgment of his conduct is comprised in these three sentences:—*Willing to release Jesus, willing to content the people, seeing that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made.* Pilate made afterwards some fresh attempts to touch these ferocious hearts; but they were fruitless like the first, as we shall see hereafter.

II. Let us apply this example, 1st, to our exterior conduct. It is not for us to give lessons to our masters, to those whom Providence has put in authority to govern and to judge us. If we chance

to become the victims of the bad policy of some of them, we should do well to imitate the silence of Jesus, and his obedience to the orders of God his Father; but let us ourselves profit by the example of Pilate.—We come into the world full of good-will and good intentions. We wish to do nothing contrary to our conscience and against our salvation. So far all is good; but let us examine ourselves seriously, and see if, with this will, we have not also a will to please the world; if this second does not counterbalance and clog the first; if we have it not in view to conciliate one with the other, by relaxing something of the strictness of duty, out of complaisance to the world, and for fear of offending it. Let us be well assured, that if we enter upon this way of conciliation we are undone. We ourselves shall perceive, but too late, that such an attempt is chimerical, and that the union of duty and complaisance is impossible. Do we wish then to stand our ground, and even to draw upon ourselves the approbation of the world, let us know how to resist it, and incur its displeasure when necessary; let not our sentiments be doubtful or concealed. Let us declare ourselves openly for virtue, justice,

charity, religion, faith, submission to the church, piety, and duty. When once the world shall see that we are determined, we shall have no outcries or disturbance to fear from thence. 2dly, Let us apply this example to the conduct of our interior. We all have within us a kind of state to govern, but a state torn by factions, divided by different interests, subject to sedition and revolt, and where what is most blinded and contemptible is making continual efforts to domineer and lay down the law. Alas! how many lament to see, that within them all is in trouble, and in the most dreadful disorder! They complain that they are no longer masters, that their passions hurry them away, and make them do things which they detest, of which they are ashamed and repent. Whence comes this?— From not having gained the mastery in the beginning, not having made themselves feared and obeyed. Do we wish to restore things to their right order, let us exert an absolute authority, let us be inexorable and uncomplying. Let us declare to our body that we expect from it nothing but servitude, labour, and the practice of penance, and never any indulgence. Let us make our heart

acquainted with the law of God, and stifle in its birth every desire not conformable to it. Let us not allow our minds to indulge in useless thoughts, or in any science but that of religion and of our duties. Let us stop our ears, bridle our tongue, and put a veil over our eyes. Let us every day consult with our conscience, let its decrees be immediately executed, and let us forthwith chastise severely the first of our senses which shall excite the least revolt, or utter the least murmur, and calm and tranquillity will soon be restored, and we shall enjoy a profound peace before the Lord, and abundance of heavenly goods.

Grant me grace, O Lord ! faithfully to observe these holy practices ; that by the servitude and dependance of my senses, and the mortification of my flesh, by the submission of my mind to thy holy will, by the perfect confidence of my heart in thy mercies, I may come to the glory and happiness which thou hast prepared for me ! Amen.

MEDITATION XXVII.

ON THE SCOURGING OF OUR SAVIOUR.
 MATT. XXVII. 26. MARK XV. 15.
 JOHN XIX. 1.

FIRST POINT.

Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him.

I. This punishment was cruel in itself. The Jewish law forbid more than forty stripes to be given, and to keep within the law it was usual to give only thirty-nine: but with the Romans the number was unlimited. Amongst the Jews the sufferer was bent or lying down; amongst the Romans he was standing, fastened to a pillar, which he embraced, his hands being bound together with straps on the other side of the pillar, and the feet joined and

fastened to its foot. The four soldiers who were to crucify the criminal, when that punishment was to follow, had the charge also of inflicting this. The scourging was done with rods, or whips of cord or leather; and sometimes these whips were furnished with knots or small bones. This punishment was so horrible among the Romans, that it was only made use of for strangers and slaves. It was used also by way of torture to make the criminal confess, and many expired under the blows, unable to bear the violence of so cruel a torment! It was, nevertheless, this cruel and disgraceful torment, O divine Jesus, which thou wert pleased to endure for us, and to which thou hast submitted to expiate our criminal delights! Oh! how can I offend thee any more!

II. This punishment was rendered more cruel by particular circumstances. The first was the motive of Pilate. He had not renounced his first plan, which he had already twice proposed, which was to chastise Jesus and dismiss him; but he wished that the people should be satisfied, and for this he desired to render Jesus an object of compassion, capable of making impression on the most unfeeling hearts; he gave his orders in

consequence to the executioners, and they were cruelly obeyed. The second was the delicateness of the flesh of Jesus. By the very first stripes this virginal flesh was bruised, cut, and laid open, and the blood streamed on all sides. The whips carried away pieces of flesh, and soon the whole body of Jesus was but one wound. What a bloody, what an atrocious spectacle! Who can think of it without shuddering? O my God, by what title can I have deserved that thou shouldst suffer so much for me? The third was the silence of Jesus. In the midst of a torture so horrible, Jesus uttered not a word; not a complaint or a groan escaped from his mouth; it would seem that he was insensible to the stripes with which he was torn and overwhelmed. A silence so divine and unexampled, far from moving these savage wretches, only served to inflame their rage, and encourage them to multiply their blows and reiterate their cruelties. They ceased only because their strength was exhausted, and for fear lest the patient should expire, and their victim escape them.

III. This punishment was infinitely cruel, from the testimony of the pro-

phets. The silence of the evangelists here is astonishing. St. Luke does not mention the scourging at all. St. Matthew and St. Mark only suppose it in this sentence:—*After having caused Jesus to be scourged.* St. John alone expressly mentions it, but only in these words:—*Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.* But if these disciples, so affectionate to their Master, restrained their zeal that it might not appear suspicious, God furnished his Son with witnesses of a different nature, such as only he could give, who, living many ages before the event, could only speak of it by divine inspiration, whose expressions could not be suspected of partiality or exaggeration, and whose testimony carries conviction along with it. It would be endless to report all that the prophets have said of the flagellation of Jesus Christ. We will content ourselves with quoting a few passages. *The wicked*, says David in the person of the Messiah, *the wicked have wrought upon my back.* They have struck upon it as smiths strike upon an anvil, with heavy strokes, in concert and without interruption: or according to another signification of the Hebrew word, they have ploughed my back, they have furrowed

it by the long and deep wounds they have made in it. And in another place, *They have numbered all my bones*, having laid them bare from the flesh which covered them. *My enemy*, says Job, *rushed in upon me like a giant: he hath torn me with wound upon wound.*—*From the sole of the foot*, says Isaiah, *even unto the head, there is no soundness in him; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* Finally, Isaiah says again: *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.* O my God ! for our iniquities ! What ! for sinners thou undergoest such a torture ; for me thou endurest such excessive sufferings ; for me thou deliverest up thy innocent flesh to be treated with the most barbarous cruelty ! And what then shall I do, my Saviour ! what shall I do for thee, and for the expiation of my own crimes ?

SECOND POINT.

It is a question sometimes asked, why our Saviour was pleased to suffer so much, since he could have redeemed us with so much less suffering ? and it is now a proper time to answer when we are

considering the first shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ by the hands of his executioners: and what is said now may serve for the whole Passion. We do not pretend to penetrate into the counsels of God, which we adore; but without attempting to fathom these abysses, we may respectfully search into the reasons of his conduct, which may be within our reach, and serve for our edification.

I. Reasons on the part of God. Our Lord was pleased to suffer to this excess to testify his love, his respect, his obedience to God his Father, and fully to satisfy his justice. Love is not idle, it likes to shew itself. It is eager for sufferings, and thinks nothing done if any thing remains to be done or to be suffered. Those who possess a spark of this divine love will enter into this sentiment, and will comprehend what must have been the thirst of Jesus for humiliations and sufferings, which were to honour his Father.

II. Reasons relating to our salvation. Jesus was our Saviour, and he would omit nothing which could contribute to our salvation. He suffered then so much, 1st, to support us in our troubles. We have many troubles and sor-

rows to undergo, in the order of nature, for the preservation of our faith, and in the practice of virtue. Our Lord was pleased, in all these troubles, to be our model, our strength, and our consolation. He desired, that in all our troubles we might be able to say, in order to support and encourage ourselves, I suffer: but what I suffer is nothing, compared with what my Master has suffered for me. 2dly, To give us a hatred for sin. It was of consequence to our salvation that we should have a lively idea of the holiness of God, of his greatness, of the severity of his judgments, of the rigour of his chastisements, of the grievousness of sin, and that we should comprehend, that every disobedience to the laws of this sovereign Majesty is an enormous crime. And what could better imprint this idea in our minds than the sufferings and humiliations of our Saviour? If we had them always before our eyes, we should never venture to commit a single sin.—3dly, To excite our confidence. After so many sins, after so often relapsing into the same sins, amidst so many faults which we daily fall into, we stand in need of a powerful motive to prevent us from giving way to despair, and to ani-

mate us to a confidence in God, without which it is impossible to please him. But what can now disquiet us, or shake our confidence, when we see the super-abundant price which has been paid for our ransom? 4thly, To animate our hopes. Nothing was better calculated to support us in the exercise of the most heroic virtues than a high idea of the happiness of heaven, and a firm hope that it will be our recompense at the end of our days. Do not we find both these motives in the consideration of all that our Lord suffered to enter into his glory, knowing by faith that he suffered it for us, and in order to make us partakers of the same glory? 5thly, To inflame our hearts with divine love.—The abridgment and perfection of the law is the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. And can we, in meditating upon the Passion of our Lord, refrain from loving a God who has given his only Son to be our Saviour? Can we help loving such a Redeemer, who has so many ways given himself to us, and who so lovingly delivered himself up for us? Can we refuse to love our brethren, whom he has loved, whom he has redeemed as well as us, and whom he calls to the same happiness as our-

selves? Now if our Lord had redeemed us by some trifling suffering, although it would be of infinite value, we should not have found in it all these advantages; and it was to procure them for us that he underwent so many outrages. How amiable then is this divine Saviour! How much does he deserve our gratitude, and that we should do all in our power to please him!

III. Reasons relating to the glory of Jesus Christ himself. By right of his birth heaven was his due: but he desired to merit it for himself and for us, in like manner as we were to merit it ourselves by the application of his merits. Now in this abode of life, from which death is banished, and where all lives in God; in this abode of glory, where all the actions and sufferings of the saints live in eternal remembrance, are always present before the throne of God, and in the mind of these happy immortals, it was not fit that the head and King of so many heroes should surpass them only by his birth-right and the dignity of his person; it was necessary that he should surpass them also by the splendour of his merits, and the heroism of his virtues. Now this glory he acquired by the profound hu-

miliations and the cruel torments which he suffered: and this glory contributes also to the felicity of the saints. What a happiness for them to have such a King at their head, to have been of his retinue, and to be at his court! How great is the union of their hearts and the ardour of their love for this King of glory, who has done so much for them, who has procured them so great a happiness, and at so much cost! Ah! how ought this thought to animate us to follow him in his humiliations and sufferings, that we may follow him eternally in the abode of his glory!

Such are the reasons which we may suppose God to have had for willing that his Son our Lord should work out our redemption by his death, and which our divine Saviour might have had for accepting these conditions, for submitting joyfully to the order of his Father, and for being obedient to him unto death, and even to the death of the cross.

THIRD POINT.

- Let us consider the sentiments with which Christians have been inspired by the scourging of Jesus; and I. In the martyrs, sentiments of joy amidst their

torments. Scourging was the first punishment which was suffered for the faith. The apostles, with St. Peter at their head, first received that honour by the sentence of the Jewish council : and *they came forth*, says the Scripture, *full of joy that they had been found worthy to suffer this injury for the name of Jesus.* St. Paul glories in having eight times undergone this punishment from the hands of the Jews, five times with whips, and three times with rods. If he avoided it under the Tribune Lysias, it was because there was no question on that occasion of the faith and name of Jesus. All the martyrs under this or similar torments have testified the same satisfaction, and have esteemed themselves happy. Who but a God can inspire such sentiments under a punishment so cruel, and hitherto so disgraceful? but on the other hand, how can those who suffer this punishment have any other sentiment, when they know that a God has been pleased to suffer it for them?

II. In the faithful under affliction, sentiments of submission and thanksgiving in their distresses. Sickneses and infirmities of the body, troubles of the mind, crosses, humiliations, misfor-

tunes, public and private calamities are God's scourges, and as it were the rods with which he chastises us. We are not insensible to the strokes which his fatherly hand inflicts upon us; but a Christian soul, who knows that God has not spared his own Son, far from murmuring, receives them with submission. She does more; she thanks him because he thereby associates her in the sufferings of his Son, because he makes her thereby expiate her sins, withdraws her from the occasions of sin, perfects and purifies her virtue, detaches her from the flesh and the world, that she may attach herself wholly to him. She enters into his designs; Jesus suffering, Jesus scourged and covered with wounds is the object of her meditation, is her support, her strength, her consolation, and her hope.

III. In penitents and fervent souls, sentiments of hatred of themselves and desires of mortifying their flesh. Our Saviour's scourging is of all the torments he endured that which mortification and fervour can most easily imitate. The discipline has been made use of in the public penances of the church, it is still used in private penances. If abuses have sometimes crept into this practice,

it is not a reason for proscribing it; and if it is not proper to recommend it to all sorts of persons, it is still less proper to interdict it entirely. We cannot without rashness, condemn or undervalue a practice which so many saints have followed; which so many discreet founders of religious orders have prescribed and recommended, and of which St. Paul himself seems to have given us the example when he says, *that he fights not as one beating the air, but as chastising his body, and bringing it into subjection.* To be ashamed of taking the discipline for penance, is in some sort to be ashamed of the scourging of our Lord. If this practice be humbling, was not his scourging so likewise, and do not we stand in need of being humbled? If it be painful, was not his scourging so too! Do we expect to expiate the sins of our flesh without making it suffer! If this is the punishment of children and slaves, are not we untractable and disobedient children, are not we insolent and rebellious slaves! The greatest prudence should no doubt regulate this practice: but is it not more commonly laid aside from cowardice than prudence! The saints derived advantages from it which we may derive, without

imitating the pious excesses which they gave into. The discipline taken regularly and with suitable moderation unites us with the scourging of our Lord, applies to us its merits, imprints the memory of it on our minds, and excites us to gratitude. It subdues and humbles the flesh, expiates its disorders, and brings it into subjection; it keeps up the fervour and joy of the soul, drives away bad thoughts, draws it out of the lethargy, langour, and sloth, which it naturally sinks into, lifts it up to God, and gives it a relish for heavenly things. Let those who cannot or who ought not to adopt this practice, supply its place by other mortifications which produce the same effects; for we ought not to pass our lives without practising some corporal punishment, in conformity to the Passion of our Lord, if we desire to become heirs of his glory.

Yes, O Lord, thy penance, great as it was, will not purify my soul, unless I unite mine to it! Perish then within me this love of the false joys of the world and all its empty glory! Make me partaker of thy humiliations and sufferings, O Jesus, that I may partake also of the happiness of heaven! Amen.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

ON THE CROWNING WITH THORNS. MATT.
xxvii. 27—30. MARK xv. 16—19. JOHN
xix. 2, 3.

FIRST POINT.

I. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band, and they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.*—After the scourging was over, and Jesus had put on his clothes, it occurred to the soldiers who had so barbarously treated him to give their companions an amusement worthy of their cruelty, the idea of which they took from the very crime which was imputed to their prisoner. He was accused of wishing to make himself King and of calling himself King of the Jews; they bethought themselves of making him a king in

mockery, and of performing the ceremony of his coronation. They conducted Jesus from the place where he had been scourged into the inward court of the palace where the soldiers resorted, and there they called the whole band about them. All eagerly obeyed the summons. Let us ourselves enter in spirit into this court, let us observe what passes there, and beg of our Lord grace to comprehend this profound mystery, and to profit by it. The first mark of royalty given to Jesus was a dirty purple cloak which was thrown over him by way of a royal mantle. This ignominy was the occasion of a cruel torment; for they first stripped him of his clothes which were already glued to the wounds that he had just received, and his blood began to flow again; our Lord nevertheless said not a word, he let not a groan escape him, and made not the smallest resistance. He suffered himself to be led along, to be stripped, to be clothed, just as it pleased them. He expiated thereby our effeminacy, the voluptuousness of our criminal flesh, our luxury in dress, and the vanity and pride which it gives birth to. He merited for us the grace of penance and mortification, grace to contemn the world and

all its pomps and glory. In corporal suffering, in humiliations, in poverty, let us unite ourselves to Jesus, clothed in this disgraceful purple.

II. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.—The soldiers, continuing their cruel diversion, got some pliant thorns and twisted them into the shape of a crown, which they put upon his head, and which they secured by forcing the thorns violently through the skin. His blood flows on all sides, and what we could not see the meanest of the brute creation suffer without sentiments of compassion and horror, served only to excite the insolent sport and the cruel insults of these barbarous wretches. Our Lord was pleased to suffer himself to be crowned with this new diadem, bearing thus upon his innocent head the fruits of the curse given to the earth, and expiating the mad ambition of our forefathers which they have transmitted to their children, and which among crowned heads and the princes of the earth, has at all times caused so much devastation and the shedding of so much blood. He expiated the lust of rule which prevails in every heart, and inclines every one to raise himself above others at the expense of justice, truth,

charity, and even of faith. He expiated all the crimes which are conceived and fostered in our guilty heads, in our memory, our imagination, and our minds. He expiated the pains which worldlings take to adorn and decorate a proud and sinful head, and to expose it to public view in order to procure adorers for this guilty idol, which is but dust, and must return to dust. He merited for us the grace of humility, of meekness, of patience, and a contempt of the grandeur and esteem of the world. In temptations, in our projects of advancement, ambition, and revenge, in impure thoughts or imaginations, let us think of Jesus crowned with thorns; and when we suffer in that part of our body, let us reflect on the sins which it has committed; and in order to expiate them, let us unite the little which we there suffer with what Jesus Christ himself suffered there for us.

III. They put a reed in his right hand. Jesus objects to nothing; he held this reed by way of a sceptre in the manner required of him. In this state he appeared to this insolent soldiery truly an object of ridicule. Had they possessed any sentiment of humanity, he might have appeared to them also an object

worthy of compassion. But in the eyes of faith, how worthy is he of our adorations, of all our love, and of all our gratitude! By this reed, he intimates to us the frailty of all the powers of the earth, the emptiness of all human grandeur; he expiates the crimes which are committed by the abuse of authority; he sanctifies the sceptres of kings, and merits for them grace to avoid the innumerable dangers with which sovereign power is beset. He merits the same grace for all those who are in command, and who in proportion to their elevation in rank are exposed to dangers of every kind. It is the duty of monarchs, and of all men in power to unite their sceptre to that of Jesus Christ, and the pains which are attached to it to those which Jesus Christ suffers. It is the duty of all men to place their confidence in the sceptre of Jesus Christ, to look upon themselves as weak reeds which can have no stability unless they put themselves in the hand of Jesus Christ, and are borne and supported by this all-powerful hand.

SECOND POINT.

And they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of

the Jews! and they took the reed and smote him on the head, and spat upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.
—In this mock homage paid to Jesus Christ, let us consider,

I. What he suffers: he suffers derision and mockery both in word and action. They came before him one after the other, and in mockery of him bent the knee, adored him and addressed him, saying, Hail King of the Jews! His sacred face is insulted by blows and defiled with spittle. He had already been treated thus in the house of Caiphas in derision of his quality of Messiah and of prophet. His quality of King cost him here much more. Finally he endures cruel and unheard-of sufferings from the blows that are given him. They took the reed out of his hand, and struck him with it on the head, thus making use of his sceptre to fasten on his head the crown which he wore. What barbarity! who can conceive the greatness of this suffering! A thorn run into the head; what a torment! What anguish every time it is touched! The head of Jesus is pierced with thorns on all sides, they are touched and stirred all at once, they are driven in with violent blows; what torture! And how long lasted this

bloody scene! How many such blows did Jesus receive! It is probable that every one of the soldiers chose to do him homage, and to give him blows in their turn. O my King and my Saviour! what a price hast thou paid for my ransom, and how dear has my soul cost thee!

II. How he suffers; with a patience more than human and wholly divine, there again is accomplished the word of the prophet: *I have not turned away my face, I have exposed it to blows and spit-tle.* Jesus had not here his eyes blind-folded, as in the house of Caiphas, he saw the insulting homage which was offered him, he saw the blows which were aimed at him, yet he was not prompted by fear to do any thing to avoid them or diminish their violence. When they took the reed out of his hand, he gave it up; when they returned it to him, he took it again. He suffered all in a profound silence, and as if he had been wholly insensible. Had the soldiers given themselves time to reflect on a patience so extraordinary, they might have suspected there was some mystery in it, and have been afraid of going too far; but on the contrary, this patience, instead of giving rise to such reflections,

increases their insolence, and confirms them in their inhumanity. What will be their surprise and despair, when they shall see Him whom they have treated so unworthily appear, on the great day of eternity, as their Judge! Jesus Christ still endures our contempt, our insults, and our blasphemies. The patience of God, which leaves so many crimes unpunished in this world, emboldens sinners ; but it ought to make them tremble. Alas ! how shall I myself be astonished, when I behold the awful majesty of Him whom I serve so negligently, whom I offend so easily, and to whom I am so frequently wanting in respect !

III. Why he suffers.—He suffers to expiate the impious worship which idolaters have offered to devils, in contempt of God, their Creator and Benefactor, to whom they owed homage, obedience, gratitude, and love ; to expiate the superficial and purely exterior worship which most of the Jews offered to God, whom they honoured with their lips, while their heart was far from him—rebellious to his laws—disobedient to his commands—attached to the earth, and indifferent to the promises of the law and the heavenly gifts which the Mes-

siah was to bring them ; to expiate the hypocritical worship of so many false Christians, who have received baptism and do not observe the obligations of it—who pride themselves on believing the gospel, and do not hear the church—who profess the true faith, and dishonour it by their works—who, by their vows and their habit, make profession of piety, and yet live in sin—who, in the most holy actions, in the use of the sacraments, in the exterior adoration of the divine Majesty, and even at the foot of the altar, insult him by the corruption of their hearts, by the passions which they foster, by the sins which they live in and love. Ah! how great a share had I, O my Saviour, in the painful and insulting homages which thou hadst to endure in the hall of Pilate ! It is I who crowned thee with this crown of thorns, who hailed thee in derision, who spit in thy face, who struck thee on the head, who caused the blood to flow from thy temples, and put thee to such exquisite torture. But thou wert pleased to suffer these cruel outrages to merit for me the grace of a true conversion ; grace, to render to God a pure worship, and to adore him in spirit and truth. It is only by thee,

O my Saviour, that I can pay him this just tribute, and wipe away the crimes of a dissembling and hypocritical worship, by which I have so often offended him! I prostrate myself then at thy feet, O my God and my King! pardon me all my irreverencies. I could wish henceforward to make thee amends, by the sincerity of my homage, for the outrages which thou still receivest amongst us. Pardon us, O Lord, and change our hearts, that we may be able, by a worship such as thou hast taught us, to make reparation for the shameful manner in which we have hitherto served thee!

THIRD POINT.

This scene of derision and cruelty on the part of the Roman soldiers was, on the part of God, a mystery of glory and salvation. It is there, upon Mount Sion, that Jesus is truly appointed King. It is there that his Father gives him the investiture, as it were, of a kingdom very different from those of the earth. It is there that Jesus takes possession of his kingdom—that he receives the insignia of his royalty—that he is constituted and declared King of Israel,

the King promised to the Jews, the salvation of the world, and the expectation of the Gentiles. It is there that Jesus becomes,

I. King of martyrs.—They will share with him the chalice of his Passion ; they will drink it with him. They will partake of his sufferings, his scourging, and his cross ; but the crown, the purple, and the sceptre, belong only to him. Tyrants may invent and exercise on his disciples the most atrocious and unheard-of torments, excepting this, which in all ages, and for all eternity, will distinguish the king from his subjects. All other punishments are subordinate to this crown of thorns, this sceptre of a reed, this bloody purple robe. It is from hence they draw their merit, their splendour, and their glory : it is hence the martyrs get their strength, their courage, and their glory. I adore thee, O King of martyrs ! Thou wert in the right to say, O sovereign King, that thy kingdom was not of this world ; and who would ever think to find, amidst so many ignominies and torments, a real royalty, so sublime, so admirable, so excellent, and so perfect.

II. King of the elect.—All are not

called to the glory of martyrdom ; but all must labour to be of the number of the elect. If we aspire to this happiness, here is our King—let us not mistake him : it is him we must follow, must imitate, must resemble, that we may enter with him into his kingdom. Let us contemplate his crown, his sceptre, and his purple. Let not this exterior terrify us : he is the King of virtues ; and it is only by humbling, mortifying, and painful virtues that we can gain heaven. Another king will present himself to us crowned with roses, glittering with glory, and holding a golden sceptre in his hand : but let us not follow him ; he is only an impostor—his pomp is only an illusion, his promises are only menaces, and the term which he would lead us to is a dreadful abyss, and an eternity of suffering. Let us follow the King of the elect : in his train, supported by his strength, animated by his example, encouraged by the greatness of our hopes, we shall find in mortification, in penance, in humility, meekness, and patience, a more sensible consolation, and more solid happiness than in all the advantages which can be promised us by the devil, the world, and the flesh. Jesus our King

has taken upon himself what was most difficult and most painful. If some thorns still remain in the paths of virtue; if we sometimes find them under our feet, let us reflect that they have pierced the head of our King, and drawn forth streams of blood. Would it become us, after this, to complain? Ah! if we are too delicate to suffer any thing under a King crowned with thorns, let us fear lest we should be one day excluded from the number of his subjects, and from the kingdom of glory to which he conducts them.

III. King of all creatures.—This royalty, full of pain and ignominy, is at the same time full of virtues and merits: this royalty, with which Jesus was invested here upon earth, was only to last for himself and his followers a short space of time; after which it was to be changed into a royalty full of grandeur, majesty, and power. We are at liberty either to submit to, or withdraw our allegiance from the first; but every creature is necessarily subjected to the second, which Jesus acquired by the first, and with it a right to reign over all creatures, and to judge them without appeal and for eternity. Friends, enemies, believers, and infidels, all

must appear before the tribunal of this sovereign Lord, and receive at his hands the irrevocable sentence which will decide their eternal lot. He will then be no longer a King of ignominy and sorrows—an object of derision and compassion, surrounded by soldiers, who insult and torment him; but a King of glory and majesty, surrounded by angels ready to execute his orders—a King, just and almighty, who will associate in his glory those who had a share in his sufferings, and will condemn to eternal torments those who shall have refused to acknowledge him—who shall have violated his laws, despised his humiliations, and who shall have outraged him either in his own person or in that of his servants.

O sovereign King, I adore thee in thy state of humiliation; do not reject me in the day of thy glory! Reign over me now and for ever! Amen.

MEDITATION XXIX.

ON JESUS BEING BROUGHT FORTH BY
PILATE. JOHN xix. 4—8.

FIRST POINT.

I. Pilate then went forth again to the people, and said unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.—Pilate seeing the state to which Jesus was reduced by the cruelty of the soldiers, flattered himself that so moving a spectacle might make impression on the hearts of the Jews, and he ordered him to be brought. He then went out on that side where the people were assembled, and appeared in the gallery whence he had spoken to them before. His intention was to predispose the minds of the people, and to inspire them with some sentiments of compassion for the man that he was going to shew to them. By declaring him innocent, he reminded

them of the judgment he had passed upon him throughout. He hinted to them in an indirect manner the condescension he had shewn to their wishes, in chastising him though innocent, and expected in return that they should be satisfied with the punishment already inflicted, although they might think him guilty. In fine, he wished to shew them that he had kept his word with them, that he had chastised him as he had promised, and even far beyond what he had promised. But in this Pilate only betrayed his duty, and degraded himself still more: he was deceived in his expectations: he condemned himself by his own confession, contradicted his own decision, and only half kept the word he had given; for he had fully executed the promise given to iniquity, but did not execute that which he had given to justice, which was, that he would dismiss Jesus, after having chastised him. Instead of dismissing him, he leaves him still at the mercy of his enemies, and he continues to act the part of an intercessor, where it was his duty to perform that of a judge. And thus do judges sometimes err, when they have to try the cause of the just, of the poor, of the widow, and the orphan.

*II. Then came Jesus forth, wearing
the crown of thorns and the purple robe.*

—Probably he had also a reed in his hand, and appeared in the painful and disgraceful state in which the soldiers had left him. It was not enough then, O my Saviour, that your ignominies should be witnessed by those who were the authors of them, you must also have the confusion of being brought forth in this disgraceful condition as a spectacle to all the people, and even to thy most cruel enemies. *And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man.* Behold Him whom you accuse of exciting sedition and aspiring to royalty. See if, in the state in which he now is, you have any thing of the kind to fear. Alas! to what a state was he reduced! His face was disfigured with bruises and blood; his body, half naked and mangled, was covered by bleeding wounds. We have seen him, says the prophet Isaiah, this man of sorrows, this lowest and meanest of men. What was become of that divine beauty which charmed and ravished every heart? Who could know it again in the sad condition in which we have seen it? We thought him a leper, struck by the hand of God. It was indeed that formidable hand which had struck and

humbled him. For us he bore the punishment which we had deserved, and which but for him we should have borne eternally, without being able thereby to expiate our offences; for it was to expiate our offences that he was covered with bruises and wounds.

III. When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.—It is not here the voice of the people that is heard. Perhaps so moving a spectacle began to excite compassion in their hearts, perhaps the pontiffs perceived it, or apprehended it. They hastened to anticipate the answer of the people, and the people did not contradict them. These barbarous and cruel wretches then are not satisfied; they begrudge Jesus his small remains of life, and will not be content till he has lost it on the cross. But what sentiments should not the sight of Jesus Christ, in the state in which Pilate brings him forth, excite in our souls? Is it enough for us, who know that it is for us he suffers, for us he is reduced to this sorrowful and abject state—a state which would move the most insensible hearts to compassion, is it enough to sympathize in his sufferings and ignominies? Can our

love and gratitude eyer make a suitable return for such great love, for such extraordinary favours?

SECOND POINT.

Behold the man.—We have seen in what sense this was uttered by Pilate to the Jews. But the expression is too remarkable not to suppose that Pilate is here the organ of God himself. We must then consider these words as addressed to us, and that Jesus is presented to us by each of the persons of the most blessed Trinity.

I. By the Father, who gives him to us as his Son and our Master, and requires us to adore and obey him. *Behold the man*, says he to us, behold the Son of Man: this Son which I promised to Adam, to Abraham, and to David; this Son of Man, who is also my beloved and only Son, who is co-substantial with me, and equal to me in all things by the divine nature which I communicate to him, who is subject and obedient to me in his human nature, to which he united himself out of love for me and you: behold him here; I give him to you, and he is yours, without ceasing to belong to me. I have

consented that he should be brought to this state, because he wished it for the love of you. In order to make reparation to my glory and to save you, he chose thus to annihilate himself; wherefore have I given him a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and in hell. It is thus that God speaks to us, and it is our part to pour forth, with all the fervour we are capable of, acts of gratitude, love, and respect, and protestations of fidelity and obedience.

II. By the Son, who presents himself to us as our Saviour and our model, who requires that we should put all our confidence in him, and that we should endeavour to resemble him. *Behold the man*, says he to us, whom you stood in need of in order to be reconciled to God, to be cured of your wounds, to be delivered from the chastisements which you had deserved. For this purpose I was made man, and all this I engaged to accomplish. I have taken upon myself the articles and conditions of your peace; I have burdened myself with your debts; I bear the weight of your languors and sorrows, of your wounds and sufferings. You see to what an excess of suffering and humiliation I am

reduced, I am in such a state that it is necessary to declare that I am a man. I am a worm of the earth and not a man, the disgrace of men, and the outcast of the people; a laughing-stock for those who behold me with the eyes of the flesh. It is to the eyes of your faith that I present myself; you know who I am, and on what account I am reduced to this state. Unite yourselves to me, put your confidence in me, follow me, and I will save you from your enemies, even as I know how to deliver myself from mine.

III. By the Holy Ghost, who presents himself to us as the King and Spouse of our souls, and requires us to love him with the most tender and respectful love. Daughters of Sion, says he to us in the Canticle, go forth and see the King of Peace in the diadem with which his mother crowned him in the day of his nuptials, that day which is the joy of his heart. *Behold the man whom I formed for you in the chaste womb of a Virgin;* behold the Diadem with which his mother the Synagogue has crowned him, and which he wears with joy, because of the ardent love for you which consumes him. This is the moment of his nuptials; ap-

proach, and if you accept him for your spouse, follow him. The moment for contracting with him an eternal alliance is not far distant. On the cross will this mystery be accomplished, and be consummated in heaven in the delights of a divine and eternal love. O my soul, what a happiness! Behold this tender Spouse came down from heaven to seek you, to ask you, and to have you. O divine Spouse, how dearly dost thou buy me! How much it costs thee to make me worthy of thee! I throw myself at thy feet, I acknowledge myself unworthy of such an exalted alliance; but since thou art pleased, by thy gifts and graces, to fill up the immense interval between us, I am far from refusing thy favours. I present to thee my tenderest vows, and a heart inflamed with love. I follow thee, divine Spouse, to Calvary and to the cross! I ask of thee nothing but grace to die there with thee. Ah! when will the happy day come when I shall be united to thee for ever? Forsake me not, tender Spouse, in this place of my exile, and during the time of my separation! until I have the happiness of seeing thee, my only consolation here below will be to unite myself to thee by thy

holy Sacrament, and to conform myself to thy cross by my sufferings !

THIRD POINT.

I. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.—Such a law never existed. The law according to which he was to die, was on the part of the Jews only the law of their passions, and on the part of Jesus the law of his love. There was a law which condemned to death blasphemers and false prophets, and there were but too many of these amongst the adorers of the true God; but there was no example among them of any one calling himself the Son of God in its proper and natural sense, so as to be considered a blasphemy. Jesus alone had called himself the Son of God in that proper and natural sense which made him equal to God. He told it to all the people in the public instructions which he delivered in the temple; he said it still more plainly before all the council; in the second council he did not retract, and he confirmed his testi-

mony by shedding his blood, and giving his life in support of this truth. He called himself Son of God, but he proved himself to be so by numberless miracles ; he proved it again by the manner in which he suffered, and by the concurrence of all the prophecies which were accomplished in him. How consoling for us is this truth ! how well-founded are our hopes ! how strongly grounded our faith ! how reasonable our worship and love !

II. Let us admire how in the course of his Passion, and by a natural series of events, Providence pointed out successively the qualities of our Lord, and his two natures both at once. Whilst Pilate presents Jesus Christ to the Jews, and shews them his degraded and humbled humanity with the words, *Behold the man*, the Jews on their side discover to Pilate his divinity, which he had not yet heard of, by the words, *He made himself the Son of God*. Jesus was accused before him of calling himself Christ the King. His quality of Christ or Messiah, and of Prophet, of which those who possessed the Scriptures were competent to judge, was disowned by the Jews, and insulted by blindfolding, blows, and spittle. His

quality of King, upon which the governor seemed competent to decide, was outraged by the Gentiles in the hall of Pilate, in the manner we have seen. Finally, his quality of Son of God is going to be outraged with the concurrence of Jews and Gentiles. The council of the Jews has already condemned Jesus for this pretended crime, and the Gentiles are going to execute the sentence by the punishment of the cross at the requisition of the Jews. What a providence! what a chain of wonderful events! Let us wonder again how it could come to pass that the Messiah, expected by the nation, appearing to have all the marks of his mission, announced by a precursor universally revered, uniting in himself the accomplishment of all the prophecies, working miracles, which make even the dullest of understanding cry out that he is the expected Messiah; how could it come to pass that the whole nation should have called for his execution, while the judge himself, who delivered him up to death, gave testimony of his innocence, and loudly declared him innocent to the end? This formal declaration of Pilate is four times repeated by the Evangelists.

III. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.*—He was not without remorse for having treated in such a manner an innocent and righteous man, who said he was the Messiah and the King promised to the Jews: But when he was told that this man also called himself Son of God, his surprise was great, and his fear still greater. He had as it were under his hand the proofs of so astonishing a truth. What he saw in Jesus, his silence, his words, his patience, his saying that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he was born to make known the truth, his innumerable miracles which Pilate must have heard spoken of, all this bespoke a heavenly origin; and if the testimony of so extraordinary a man should be added to all these proofs, it could no longer be a matter of doubt. It remained only for Pilate to satisfy himself as to this last point, and this is what he did in the sequel. It must be owned that Pilate had good grounds for his alarm; for to use ill, to insult, to put to death the Son of God, is something dreadful. But can our unbelievers, who know what Pilate knew, who know moreover the motives of Jesus for submitting to

torments and death, who know of his resurrection, and who see his cross adored by all nations, and his religion established on the ruins of idolatry, can they without fear contemn, insult, and blaspheme him? Do the heretic and sinner, who believe in him, reflect that it is the church of the Son of God which they abandon, or the law of the Son of God which they transgress? Alas! ought not I myself, who make profession of serving him, to be penetrated with fear and respect when I think that it is the Son of God that I serve, his sacraments that I receive, his commandments that I keep, his judgment that I expect, his punishments or rewards that I deserve?

I detest, O my Saviour, all the iniquities I have committed against thee, as Son of God! I resolve henceforth to acquit myself of all the duties of faith, adoration, compunction, love, and gratitude which I owe to thee under this title. Thou hast made it a law for thyself to die for me, I this day make a law for myself to live only for thee! Amen.

MEDITATION XXX.

ON PILATE DELIVERING UP JESUS TO BE CRUCIFIED. JOHN xiii. 9—16.

FIRST POINT.

I. Pilate went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.—It was not the country of Jesus that Pilate inquired about; he knew that he was a Galilean, and from Nazareth; he questioned him respecting his origin in order to know what he said of it himself, and if it were true that he made himself pass for being of heavenly origin, for being the Son of God. The silence of Jesus on this occasion was caused by the bad dispositions of Pilate; not unlike those of Herod, or those of wicked men and the great ones of this world, when they take upon them to examine into religious

questions. The first of these bad dispositions was an idle curiosity. Pilate, whose imagination ran upon the fabulous diyinities, and the heroes to whom they had given birth, wanted to know how, among a people who acknowledged but one God, Jesus could call himself the Son of God. But the purity of the mystery of the Incarnation, and of the pregnancy of a Virgin, was not be confounded with these impure fables, by which it should seem that the devil wished to anticipate the birth of the true Son of God, and to obscure its glory by this gross imitation. Our infidels nevertheless are not ashamed to go to this infected source in search of resemblances and parallels in order to excuse and authorise their blasphemies. The second bad disposition was a proud presumption. Pilate supposed that he had a right to put this question, and thought that it was incumbent upon Jesus to answer him. But a mystery so sublime is known only to the Father, and to those to whom the Son is pleased to reveal it; that is to say, to the humble and little ones only, and not the proud and presumptuous. The third bad disposition was a prudence according to the flesh. Pilate wished to

form his judgment by what Jesus should answer him, but he was all the time resolved to consult his worldly interest, and give that the preference. The dispositions opposite to these are simplicity, humility, purity of heart, and detachment from all creatures. Let us put ourselves in these dispositions, if we wish that Jesus should not be silent in our regard.

II. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Pilate justifies by these words what we have said of his bad dispositions. He shews moreover the false notion he has of his own power, which is but too commonly the case with all persons in authority. They imagine that they are independent, and at liberty to decide according to their liking, their interest, or their caprice. To crucify or to acquit is a matter which depends upon themselves, and is for them the same thing. But are not justice, charity, reason, and the laws to be listened to? Do they impose no obligation, no limits to this boasted power? Is there not a sovereign Master who will judge our judgments, and to whom kings themselves

must render an account of the use they have made of their authority? How little would places be in request, how much would those who hold them be humbled and alarmed, did they reflect on the account they must give to God of all their decisions! We may use the complaint of Pilate, but with a different motive, when we find ourselves weak and spiritually dry: What, O Lord! may we say to him, *Speakest thou not unto me?* Knowest thou not that without thee I can do nothing? Discover to me, O Lord, the charms and the rules of thy divine extraction! Speak but a word and my soul shall be healed, enlightened, ravished, inflamed by thy love.

III. *Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*—What majesty in this answer, and how worthy the Son of God! 1st, Jesus tacitly admits that he is the Son of God, since he does not deny the accusation brought against him, and while he makes no answer to the question Pilate put to him on that head, he replies fully to what followed. 2dly, He checks the pride of this magistrate, by reminding him that his

power comes from God. 3dly, He gives us an example of the obedience we owe to the authorities established by God, even when they abuse their power. 4thly, He reproaches Pilate with his sin, but indirectly, and with admirable meekness. 5thly, He shews himself a supreme and enlightened Judge by the discernment he makes of sins, and the judgment he passes on them, in deciding the sin of Caiphas to be greater, because the power which he received and abused was more holy, and accompanied with greater lights ; because he acted through passion, envy, and hatred, and Pilate only through weakness and against his will ; because, in fine, Caiphas gave an impulse to all the rest, hurrying along the priests and magistrates by his authority, and misleading the people by his calumnies and cabals. It is by this rule that Jesus will judge of the grievousness of our sins at the last day. Let us forestall his judgment; and judge ourselves ; let us expiate our sins by repentance, let us avoid committing them in future, and let us be faithful in the discharge of all our duties. What exalts the divinity of this answer is, that Jesus spoke thus with his body mangled, with wounds, and wearing his

crown of thorns upon his head. Such were the last words which Jesus uttered before Pilate in the hall of judgment.

SECOND POINT.

I. From thenceforth Pilate sought to release him.—The words which Jesus had just uttered, and which were the last which Pilate was to hear from his mouth, made a great impression on his mind. He appears touched, converted, sorry for the past, resolved to do better in future, determined to deliver Jesus, and to return to the path of justice from which he had gone astray. Ah! how great is the interval between a sinner convinced and a sinner converted! The sinner sometimes mistakes the matter himself, but his actions easily discover the secret dispositions of his heart.—How does Pilate proceed to repair his injustice? He seeks an expedient to deliver Jesus, and he seeks it with a sincere desire of finding it, and a firm resolution of embracing it if he finds it. But what an abuse! what blindness! Why seek what he has in his own hands? Has he not the right to deliver him immediately? Has he not just said himself that he had power to release

him? Did he not engage to do so when he condemned him to be scourged? Did he not give the people notice of it? What more then does he seek? He seeks to reconcile duty and passion. This he has been seeking from the beginning, but this he has never found, and never will find. A sinner desires to be converted, a tepid soul wishes to betake herself to a life of fervour; it is a thing determined on, and which they are resolved to execute. Happy dispositions! holy resolution! What do they do to carry it into effect? They seek for the means, they seek a proper time and a favourable occasion, they wait for a more quiet situation, where, freed from certain cares, they will meet no further obstacles to their pious designs. What an error! what an illusion! As if there could be virtue without obstacles, and as if the first effect of a sincere conversion was not to place us above all difficulties! We lose the present time, and we seek a time which we shall never find. Meanwhile our sins accumulate, their number is augmented, their enormity increases, and we die.

II. Pilate, full of his project, presented himself to the people, *but the Jews*, aware of his intention, did not

give him time to speak, and *cried out*, saying, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.*

—The royalty which Jesus claimed was so far from infringing on the rights of Cæsar, that Jesus himself, since his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, had declared the obligation of paying tribute to Cæsar in that admirable sentence, *Give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.* But to calumny, envy, and hatred, nothing comes amiss. It is by such frivolous alarms that pains are constantly taken to throw suspicion on the fidelity of those who are only the more faithful to Cæsar for being faithful to God and his church. But who can depend on the fidelity due to Cæsar from those who have already thrown off the yoke, and violated all the laws of religion?

III. The name of Cæsar, as was expected, made a great impression upon Pilate. He knew very well that the kingdom which Jesus laid claim to was not of this world; that his quality of King was a matter of religion, and not an affair of state; that Herod had not taken umbrage at it, and that it could

not give offence to Cæsar. Thus Pilate did not fear to give him always the title of King of the Jews, and he even would have it written on his cross. If Pilate then had possessed a little more firmness, he might have despised these groundless clamours and menaces ; but a man who has no other God but his own interest, to which he is resolved to sacrifice every thing, is easily disconcerted and intimidated. At the very name of Cæsar all his projects of delivering Jesus vanished ; he suddenly changed his mind, and determined to give him up. One passion that is master of the heart, however weak it may appear, is enough to overthrow all the good purposes which a sense of integrity and religion may have excited.

THIRD POINT.

I. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat, in a place which is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour.—Let us recapitulate these circumstances, and first let us consider the persons concerned. These are, the

Son of God there present, and cited as a criminal ; the people of God who call for his death, and a Gentile, a Pagan, who is to pass judgment upon him. The place is the tribunal of the Roman empire, established in the middle of the holy city. The evangelist names it in three languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as if thereby to intimate to us that all the nations of the earth are interested in the sentence about to be issued from this tribunal, which may be considered as the tribunal of God himself. The day was a Friday, on which day the feast of the Passover fell in that year, and it was the eve of the most celebrated Sabbath-day in the year, called the great Sabbath, because it fell during the solemnity of the Passover. The time was just before the beginning of the sixth hour, or noon-tide. The whole city had been in motion from break of day. Three of the constituted authorities had sat in judgment on the business ; the general council of the nation, the King of Galilee, and the Roman Governor. Before this last had appeared, the pontiffs, the priests, the doctors of the law, the magistrates, the elders of the people, in order to impeach Jesus. Some time after, the de-

puties of the twelve tribes had repaired thither to demand the release of a criminal. The festival of the Passover had drawn a crowd of strangers to Jerusalem. These strangers, as well as the citizens, had had the means of assisting at the decision of this cause, of great importance in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of faith much more important to the designs of God. Jesus was born in a stable at midnight and without witnesses ; but he is pleased to deliver himself up to death at Jerusalem, at the Passover, in the middle of the day, and in the sight of the whole world. Let us admire and adore, and attend to the sequel.

II. Pilate being seated on his tribunal, saith unto the Jews, Behold your King.
 —I adore thee, O my King ! King of heaven and earth, King of men and angels, King of endless ages, King the more to be adored because thou art going to deliver thyself up to death for the salvation of thy people, and for mine in particular ! *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him !* This is at least the third time that they make the air resound with this sanguinary cry, and it will be the last. Yes, ungrateful people, your prayer will be

heard; this King, this your divine Saviour will be crucified, notwithstanding his acknowledged innocence, notwithstanding the remorse of the judge who condemns him, and the efforts he makes for his deliverance. Pilate once more entreats them for the last time, and *saith to them, Shall I crucify your King?* Shall a Pagan then speak thus to the people of God, and not be listened to? Ah! how often has our conscience made us the same reproach, and been disregarded in like manner! *The chief priests answered, We have no King but Cæsar.* Ah! rightly did we call them infidels, and men without religion; here they throw off the mask. It is not Jesus in particular they renounce, but the Messiah, whoever he may be. The expectation of the Messiah, of a King of the race of David, who will deliver Israel, is a vulgar error which they laugh at in secret, and which they here declare against in public. But can the people quietly hear such a blasphemy? Ah! senseless people, how you suffer yourselves to be led away! You adopt without distinction all the opinions of your leaders, you speak by their mouth, you renounce the faith of your fathers and the promise made to them, you will

have no king but Cæsar; your prayer shall be heard, you shall no longer have king or kingdom, nor commonwealth nor state, you shall be subject to Cæsar and to all the Cæsars of the earth, you shall lead a wandering vagabond life, the disgrace of the world, and the outcast of all nations. You shall see the Cæsars, under whom you live, acknowledge and adore him whom you this day reject. May you one day at least be moved by so moving a sight, and be converted to him! Meanwhile your existence, your dispersion, and your hardness of heart, will be for us a conspicuous proof of the divinity of him you are going to crucify.

III. Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified.—After Pilate had so many times interrogated Jesus, so often declared him innocent, and made so many efforts to save him, the result of all at last is to deliver him up to be crucified. But how does he deliver him up to them? Is it by a sentence of condemnation? This does not appear; and after all that he had said or done, how could he dare to pronounce it? Is it by a simple permission? He had already twice given this permission, and they were not satisfied with it. Is

it Pilate that crucifies him? He has just excused himself, and we see him deliver up Jesus to the Jews to be crucified. Is it the Jews that crucify him? They have declared that this was not lawful for them to do. There is no comprehending this judgment of Pilate. It is plain only that all order, reason, equity, and legal forms, are here neglected and set aside. *He delivered him.* This is all the gospel says of it; and it is remarkable that all the four evangelists make use of this expression, which shews clearly that there was no proceeding of a more formal nature against Jesus; yet he became the victim, as much as if a sentence had been pronounced against him with all the forms of law. What injustice! what atrocity! Let us learn, as followers of Jesus, to complain of nothing. Jesus was crucified by the authority of Pilate, and at the solicitation of the Jews; but thus was our salvation wrought, and the designs of God accomplished. Suffer me, O my divine Redeemer, to accompany thee to the end of thy sacrifice, and let me never forget that thou art going to execution to save my life, and to expiate my crimes by thy death! Ah! may I be fastened with thee to the cross,

like thy apostle, by my love, by mortifying my desires, and by partaking of thy sufferings ! Amen.

MEDITATION XXXI.

ON JESUS CARRYING HIS CROSS. MATT.
XXVII. 31, 32. MARK XV. 20, 21.
LUKE XXIII. 26. JOHN XIX. 16, 17.

FIRST POINT.

And they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And he went forth, bearing his cross. Jesus suffers here three grievous torments :

I. The taking off the mantle. Let us recollect that, after the scourging of Jesus Christ, when his whole body was

mangled and covered with wounds, he put on his own clothes; that shortly after these clothes, which began to stick to his wounds, were taken off in order to put on him a purple mantle. He wore this mantle during all the time that the cruel sport of his coronation lasted, and all the time that Pilate was shewing him to the people, and parleying and arguing with the Jews. It was after having sported with Jesus so long, and in so many ways, that they violently tore off the mantle, and opened his wounds afresh; a torment the more acute, from its being now closely glued to them, in consequence of his having worn it so long.

II. The leaving on his crown. This crown, which Jesus carried to the grave, was to him a constant source of acute sufferings. He was not free from them even when at rest, but the least motion he made rendered them much more grievous: now how often did not the wood of the cross stir these twisted thorns, either whilst this divine Saviour carried his cross, or whilst he lay thereupon to be nailed to it, or, in fine, during the whole time that he remained fastened to it?

III. The carrying his cross. This

long and heavy cross was laid upon the bruised and mangled shoulders of Jesus. *He went forth bearing his cross.*—Consider, O my soul, thy Saviour coming forth from the hall of judgment bowing down under this heavy weight, drained of his blood, and scarcely able to support himself. O my divine Saviour, how much does my redemption cost thee! Ah! now I see plainly that he who refuses to carry his cross after thee is unworthy of thee, and will never follow thee into the mansions of glory!

SECOND POINT.

I. Jesus, exhausted with loss of blood, could not long support the burden laid upon him. He sunk under the weight, and his enemies perceived him to be so overwhelmed that they feared he might expire before they had the barbarous pleasure of crucifying him. It was this fear, and not compassion, which engaged them to give him assistance. What had not Jesus to suffer on this occasion, not only on account of his strength being exhausted, but for the cruel treatment he met with? Let us compare ourselves with this model. We sink under the evils we have to endure:

according to us, our labours and sufferings are above our strength. Ah! cowards that we are, it well becomes us to complain, when Jesus, falling under the weight of his cross, makes no complaint! How far are we from having resisted unto blood, and we cry out that we are overdone, that we do more than we are able? How disgraceful are these murmurs and complaints in the mouth of a Christian! It is not our strength that fails us, as with Jesus; it is our courage, virtue, and fervour. Let us acknowledge our sluggishness, let us humble ourselves and redouble our efforts.

II. The weakness of Jesus is not from himself, but from us. If he falls under the weight of the cross, which his father has laid upon him, it is because he holds our place, and that we are unable of ourselves to bear the weight of the wrath of an offended and angry God. The devils and the reprobate are overwhelmed with it, and notwithstanding all their torments, are unable to appease this divine wrath. Never could we have hoped for a reconciliation, had not the beloved Son offered himself for us, and consented to humble himself under the powerful hand of divine just-

ice. It was not enough that he should suffer and should die, it was necessary that he should be overwhelmed with the weight of his sufferings, and that all the world, and even his enemies, should see that he was overwhelmed and exhausted. Let us hence understand what sin is, and how great is the rashness of a feeble creature that dares to fly in the face of its Creator, and to employ the faculties it has received from him in disobeying and offending him!

III. The word of God, by being made man for our redemption, put on our nature, our mortality, our weakness, to communicate to us his nature, his life, and his strength. Contemplate Jesus on his way to Calvary carrying his cross; he bends under the burden, he staggers, he falls for want of strength. See Jesus in the martyrs, in children, in tender virgins; he triumphs, he despises torments, he braves death, he confounds the tyrants, and amazes the executioners. The weakness of Jesus is our strength, because the more we are oppressed for his sake, the stronger we are in him. The weakness of Jesus is our consolation, because he has experienced our weakness, and knows how to compassionate it. Finally, the

weakness of Jesus is our glory, because virtue is made perfect in infirmity, and because the strength of Jesus Christ abides in him who is exhausted and suffers for his sake. Jesus sinking under the weight of his cross, rids it of its rigours, its weight, and its ignominy, and renders it sweet, light, and glorious. The weakness of Jesus then is a mystery full of truth, of strength, of wisdom, and of love. Let us constantly meditate on this mystery, in order that placing in Jesus all our confidence and strength, we may not despair, we may not be discouraged, and that we may ever glory, not in ourselves, but in him alone.

THIRD POINT.

And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus : him they compelled to bear his cross, and on him they laid it that he might bear it after Jesus.

I. Simon the Cyrenian in bearing the cross of Jesus is here a figure of all the faithful. Jesus suffered for us not to exempt us from suffering, which would be unsuitable for sinners, but to render

our sufferings meritorious, worthy of God, and capable of reconciling us to him by being united with the sufferings of Jesus. All the sufferings of the righteous, if piously borne, are the cross of Jesus. This is not all ; they supply what is wanting to the sufferings of Jesus, in order to make but one body with him and his church. Simon does not only carry the cross of Jesus, but he carries it when Jesus can carry it no longer ; he carries it the rest of the way, and even to Mount Calvary, in order that Jesus may there fulfil the mystery of our redemption. This is not yet all. The sufferings of the just are the relief of Jesus. Whoever suffers for the love of Jesus, assists and relieves Jesus with Simon : he joins with Simon in giving succour to Jesus, and in procuring him relief. It is thus that Jesus unites us to himself in all ways, and that he associates us with him in his labours that he may associate us with him in his glory. What can be greater or more divine ?

II. Simon the Cyrenean is here a figure of all the faithful, inasmuch as he bears the cross of Jesus by the order of Providence. Simon was a Jew, as his name shews ; he was a native of

Cyrene, the capital of Lybia, and he was established at Jerusalem, where he had property. From the choice which God made of him on this remarkable occasion, we may infer that Simon was one of the just, who awaited the redemption of Israel. Meanwhile he appears to have led an innocent, quiet, and laborious life. Often withdrawing into the country, he did not concern himself with the cabals of the city. He was ignorant of what had passed that morning and the day before, and consequently had no share in the crime of the great, nor in the infidelity of the people. He was returning quietly from his country-house to take his meal, when at the entrance of the city he found himself in the midst of a great tumult, surrounded by soldiers, and compelled to carry a cross to the place of execution. He was soon apprized that he carried it for Jesus, that man of wonders, whom he had heard speak of, and perhaps knew. Perhaps his two sons were already disciples of Jesus. It would be in vain for us to endeavour to penetrate into the sentiments of his heart at that time. What we are certain of is, that he was honoured with the cross of Jesus by a particular choice.

of divine Providence, and that though it is said that he was constrained to carry the cross of Jesus, it is not said that he complained or murmured at carrying it all the way to Mount Calvary. What is also certain is, that after the descent of the Holy Ghost and the preaching of the gospel, he congratulated himself in having helped Jesus to carry his cross, on having been exposed with him to public view, and having shared in his ignominies ; that he considered this event as the most honourable circumstance of his life, and that the church looks upon him as a privileged man. It is thus that we look upon him still, and thus he will be looked upon by all future ages. The glory of Simon redounds also on his sons ; their names and his will be read in the gospel with that of Jesus till the consummation of the world. Let us apply this to ourselves. Crosses of our own choice are good ; but we ought to esteem much more those which Providence lays upon us, whether they come from necessary causes and fortuitous events, or from arbitrary causes and the injustice of men. The repugnance which we feel to bear them does not always take away the merit, nay, it often augments their

value. Although instructed by faith, we are not sensible here below of all the merit of our crosses : a day will come when they will constitute our happiness and our glory.

III. Simon of Cyrene is here a figure of all the faithful, inasmuch as he carries the cross of Jesus after Jesus. We see here reduced to action the precept which Jesus has given us of carrying our cross after him, Simon carrying the cross of Jesus after Jesus is the faithful picture of the life of every Christian who would render himself worthy of the name. To carry our cross is a necessity ; to carry it for Jesus is a duty, to carry it since Jesus has carried it, is an honour ; to carry it after Jesus, having Jesus before us and continually before our eyes, is a felicity.

O happy Simon ! O a thousand times happy he, who, like you, is chosen by Providence to carry the cross of Jesus after Jesus. No, my divine Saviour, thou shalt not alone be loaded with the weight of my crimes ! It is I who have sinned, it is I who must be punished. I accept then with joy, I request even, a share in thy sufferings. Loaded with the precious burden of thy cross, and

interiorly supported by thy grace, I shall become more active, and more eager to run in the way of thy commandments!
Amen!

MEDITATION XXXII.

ON THE WOMEN WEEPING OVER JESUS.
LUKE XXIII. 27—31.

FIRST POINT.

I. And there followed him a great company of people and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him.—Corrupted as Jerusalem was, we must not imagine that all who accompanied our Saviour were his enemies. These were indeed the greater number; but a band of his faithful followers walked apart,

and wept bitterly on account of this just man, so worthy at once of their adoration and their compassion.— Amongst this multitude of fervent Israélites, a considerable number of pious women made still louder lamentations, and gave public testimony of their tender and respectful attachment to the person of this innocent victim. The hand of power can withdraw all succour, but it cannot stifle every voice. Let us join with these pious women, and let our hearts be moved with compassion at the sight of Jesus, covered with wounds and quite exhausted, led along to execution to die in excruciating torments.

II. *But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.*—Pious as these tears were, they were nevertheless imperfect. These women bewailed Jesus as a just man oppressed, vanquished by his enemies, fallen into their snares; sinking under the credit and artifices of their cabal, and unable to escape from death. Ah! let us take care in bewailing Jesus not to mingle with our tears any mean ideas of weakness and impotency ! Jesus, in the state to which he is reduced, is still master of heaven and earth. It is he who regulates human events, and no-

thing happens but according to his will and by the secret dispositions of his providence. Let us weep then, but let our tears be tears of compunction and penance for our sins, which have brought Jesus into this state; tears of gratitude and love for Jesus, who, to deliver us from our sins and from hell, was pleased to endure such sufferings.

III. But weep for yourselves and for your children.—As Jesus had appeared insensible to the honours which were shewn him on the day of his triumph, and thought only of weeping over Jerusalem and the misfortunes with which it was threatened, he seems here in like manner to forget his sufferings, and to think only of the misfortunes which threaten those who weep over him, if they and their children do not renounce the infidelity of Jerusalem, and believe in him when shortly after the gospel will be preached, and the scandal of his Passion wiped away by the glory of his resurrection. There is every reason to suppose, that after Pentecost these pious women understood the meaning of the advice which Jesus here gives them, and that they profited of it by embracing among the first the faith of the gospel. As for us, we here see Jesus always the

same, always great, always a Saviour, always good and amiable, always mindful of our interests, and commanding us to be mindful of them ourselves.

SECOND POINT.

I. *For behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never gave suck.*—Jesus here foretels, as he did on the day of his triumph, the evils which would fall upon Jerusalem, when it would be besieged and taken by the Romans. These evils have come to pass, but they are the figure of still greater evils which will beset sinners at the last day.

II. *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*—Which of the reprobate, at the sight of the burning flames and never-ending eternity which is going to be his portion, does not desire and call for annihilation? Ah! we think little now of these avenging flames; but when we shall see ourselves on the point of being hurled into them, what will be our cries, our despair? Barren despair, alas! and unavailing cries! It is now that we must make our cries be heard by the

Father of mercies, by offering to hitn the blood of his only Son shed for us, and uniting ourselves to his cross by sincere repentance. Then, instead o partaking in the despair of the reprobate, our hope will be firm, and will not be confounded.

But what a shame for the Jews to have refused to acknowledge their Messiah, and to have crucified him! What a shaine for the nations to have refused to receive their Saviour, and to have put to death those that announced him to them! What a shame for heretics and schismatics to have preferred the voice of seducers to that of their pastors, and to have refused to acknowledge the church of Jesus Christ from which they sprung! What a shame for sinners to have preferred their passions to the law of their God, the love of perishable things to the love of eternal things! What a shame for all the reprobate to be damned, after having had so many helps to salvation! What a shame for myself to see the whole detail of my life and all my sins laid open! Where shall I then hide myself? Where shall I find an abyss deep enough to screen me from the sight of my Judge, and from the eyes of the whole universe?

Ah! now is the time to seek an asylum, and there remains no other for me than penance. It is at the feet of the priest that I will bury my sins and hide them for ever, by declaring them all to him sincerely and exactly. There they shall be wiped away, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and buried in eternal oblivion. I have already done so, O my Saviour, and when necessary, I will repeat it anew! Wash me more and more, that my soul, purged of all its stains, may dare to appear before thee, and await with confidence the accomplishment of thy words, and the decision of thy judgment.

THIRD POINT.

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?— Jesus here suggests to us three reflections:—

I. What he is, and what we are.— Jesus is this green tree, this fertile tree, loaded with flowers and fruits: we are this dry tree, dead, barren, and unprofitable. Jesus is the Just of God, the Saint of Saints, all whose actions are virtues and acts of pure charity: we are sinners who, to our natural corrup-

tion and propensity to evil, have added a thousand vicious habits to which we abandon ourselves. Jesus is the Son of God, the incarnate word, the second person of the blessed Trinity, making but one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost: we are vile creatures, worms of the earth, and so inferior in rank that the distance between us and God is infinite. Jesus took upon himself our iniquities in obedience to his Father, and out of love to us; we are loaded with our own sins, which we committed by disobedience and rebellion against God. Now if this only Son of God, who has but the resemblance of sin, and only assumed this resemblance from motives of the most ardent charity, be thus crushed under the hand of his Father, what will be our lot?

II. What is required of him, and what is required of us in this world.—A poor, painful, laborious life, spent in the exercise of every virtue, and tried by contradictions and constant persecutions, is what the heavenly Father requires of his beloved Son. But this is not enough; divine justice requires that he should be covered with bruises, satiated with ignominy, drenched with bitterness, that he should undergo an

agony, that he should sink under the tremendous weight of God's justice. This is not yet enough: it is required that he be nailed to a cross, and die thereon in torments and infamy. Thus is the green tree treated; and we, the dry tree, how are we treated? What is required of us in this world to be saved? If God required of each of us what he required of his Son, we should have no reason to complain: but O mercy, O clemency, O infinite goodness! all the punishment is for this adorable Son, and all the favours are for us! His blood was shed, ours is not called for; we have only to offer his, to apply it to ourselves by receiving the Sacraments appointed, to unite ourselves to him who gave them to us, and then the little that we do is accepted, and by the merits of our Saviour we are saved. It would be then in us a great injustice and extreme ingratitude still to complain of the severity of religion and the rigours of penance. Ah! quite the contrary; let us undertake all our duties with joy, let us exalt the mercies of the Lord who requires so little of us, after requiring so much of his Son, our Lord and Master.

III. How he is treated, and how we

must expect to be treated, in the other world. --If we believe in him, if we follow him, we shall be with him in heaven by the merits of his redemption ; but if we refuse to believe in him, to hope in him, to practise his law, and observe his commandments, we shall remain with all our sins upon our heads ; and in this state how do we expect to be treated ? Ah ! let us expect nothing but an eternity of torments. An eternity ! At this word nature shudders, reason is troubled, and impiety exclaims. But the justice of God is above the reason of man and the wishes of impiety. If we meditate well what Jesus Christ is, and what he has suffered, hell has no longer any thing to surprise us. Far then from murmuring at the rigours of hell, let us think rather of avoiding it by the merits of him who suffered so much to deliver us from it.

Henceforward, O Jesus, the thought of hell shall be ever present to my mind, that I may labour to avert the woes thou hast here predicted ! O infinite goodness of my Saviour, sinking and fainting under the overwhelming load of the evils which thou endurest for the love of me, thou wouldest have me forget them to think only of my own ; more

concerned for my sufferings than for thy own, thou wouldest have me reserve my tears for myself. I will weep then only for my crimes ! At the sight of that severity with which thy Father treateth thee because thou art loaded with my sins, I will continually ask myself how I shall be treated, who am covered with my own iniquities ; or rather, O Jesus, I will take refuge in thy sacred wounds, in order to screen myself from thy vengeance in time and eternity ! Amen.

MEDITATION XXXIII.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD.
 MATT. xxvii. 33, 34—38. MARK xv.
 22, 23—27, 28. LUKE xxiii. 32—34.
 JOHN xix. 17, 18.

FIRST POINT.

And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is interpreted Calvary.
 —The attention of the four evangelists

to name this place, and to mention its Hebrew name as more expressive than the Latin appellation which had been given to it, is very remarkable, and seems to countenance the ancient tradition of the Jews, that our first father Adam, the head of all mankind, was buried there, and that hence that place bore the name of Golgotha, which signifies Head. Admitting the truth of this tradition, which carries with it nothing improbable, let us admire the conduct of divine Providence, which wills that death should be overcome in the very place where it crumbled us into dust in the person of our first father, and that the sentence of death pronounced against us all should be cancelled by the Redeemer in the very place where it was executed on the first sinner. Again, Mount Sion, Moria, and Calvary, are only parts of the same mountain. The two first were included in the city of Jerusalem, and the third was without the walls. Melchisedech had offered bread and wine in Jerusalem; Isaac was bound upon Mount Moria, upon which was also built the temple where the sacrifices were offered; and Jesus Christ is immolated and offers his sacrifice, of which all the

others were the figure, on Mount Calvary, which is a part of Moria. It is not surprising that Christians should at all times have had so much devotion and eagerness to visit these holy places. Let us survey them in spirit; but let us principally fix our minds there where was wrought the greatest of the mysteries, the end and accomplishment of all the rest.

SECOND POINT.

And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh and gall; and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. —Jesus, being arrived at Mount Calvary, began by expiating the sin of our first parents, which was gluttony. He tasted the potion which was offered him, because it was bitter; but he refused it because it was strengthening, and intended to blunt the feelings of those who were going to suffer. Let us learn to mortify ourselves in our eating and drinking. Let us avoid a sensuality which was the occasion of our ruin. Let us suffer without murmuring, the bad tastes which we meet with in what is set before us. Let us know how to abstain from what might give us pleasure, or even from what we may judge

necessary for us. It was by a want of mortification that sin began; it is by mortification that penance must begin. It was to gratify their sensuality that our first parents disobeyed the law of God; it is by mortifying our palate we must shew our obedience, particularly when the precept of the church unites our penance to that of all the faithful. This gall was foretold by the prophet. We shall explain this prophecy, when we shall have seen it fully accomplished.

THIRD POINT.

I. *Then they crucified him.*—Jesus is stripped of his clothes, and suffers the punishment of sin, which was for our first fathers the shame to see themselves naked. Jesus, stripped as much as common decency would permit, had not only the shame of appearing naked before all the people, but the shame of appearing with his body covered with bruises and his flesh mangled, bearing upon him the marks of the disgraceful punishment which he had lately undergone. It is thus he expiates the criminal nakedness of sinners, and their pride in concealing or dissembling, even

in the tribunal of penance, to avoid a salutary confusion.

II. Jesus lies down upon the cross, and repairs the disobedience of the first man. The cross is on the ground ; the altar is prepared, and only awaits the victim. At the first order of the executioners, Jesus, in obedience to his father, stretches himself at full length upon the cross, presents his hands and feet, and becomes obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.

III. Jesus is nailed to the cross, and expiates our criminal pleasures. His tormentors forthwith drive the nails through his hands and feet, and his blood plentifully gushes from the wounds. Thus is the innocent flesh of Jesus treated to expiate the crimes of ours ! Thus does ours deserve to be treated to expiate its own ! O my flesh, if I do not treat thee so cruelly, hope not at least to enjoy any of the delights which my Saviour expiates with the effusion of his blood ! Reflect that thou must be like his flesh upon Mount Calvary in order to become like to him in heaven. If I do not really nail thee to a cross, I will crucify thee at least by the rigour of penance, and by refusing every satisfaction which may be con-

ducive to sin. Contemplate thy Saviour nailed to a cross! The cross, the cross is the place for the flesh, the treatment that suits it, and the only means to save it!

IV. Jesus is lifted up on the cross, and there undertakes the office of Mediator. The cross is lifted up, the foot of it is let down into the earth and made fast, and the Son of God remains hanging by his wounds between heaven and earth. O what a moving and astonishing spectacle! But oh! what a profound and adorable mystery! Jesus is lifted up, and from thence draws all things to himself. Behold, nations of the earth, Jews and Gentiles, behold your Saviour exposed to the eyes of all! Come and adore him, and pay him your homage! Jesus is lifted up between heaven and earth to reconcile one with the other. This is the moment appointed in the councils of God for renewing in Jesus Christ all things, both in heaven and on earth. I adore thee, O my Saviour, hanging on thy cross, and acknowledge thee for my Mediator with God thy Father! Grant then by the precious blood which flows from thy hands and feet that I may be perfectly reconciled to him, and that I may never break through this

reconciliation which is so necessary to me, and which has cost thee so much!

FOURTH POINT.

And there were also two others who were thieves led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the two thieves, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And Jesus was in the midst. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, He was numbered with the wicked.—It was not enough, to point out his office of Mediator, that Jesus should hang between heaven and earth, he must also be between sinners. This circumstance was foretold of the Messiah, and it is here fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Jews intended thereby to dishonour him, and they confirmed his quality of Messiah. The Pagans often took care to torment the Christians at the same time with other criminals ; but this only augmented the glory of the martyrs, by giving them this mark of resemblance to Jesus Christ. Hence let us draw two practical consequences : the first, not always to judge those to be guilty who suffer as criminals and with criminals ;

the second, never to complain that we are taken for what we are not, that we are confounded with the wicked and treated like them. Let us reflect that our Lord was treated thus, and let us rejoice that we resemble him.

FIFTH POINT.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—I. The principle of this prayer is our Saviour's infinite charity. He hates sin, and dies to destroy it; but he loves the sinner, and dies to save him. This prayer of the Messiah was foretold by the prophet as well as his being numbered with the wicked. Without this prayer, the blood of Jesus, like that of Abel, would cry for vengeance; but thereby it cries for mercy.

II. The object of this prayer is all sinners, all who contributed to our Saviour's death; not only his executioners, accusers, judges, and the Jewish people who demanded his death, but all mankind are comprised in this prayer, because all men by their sins were the real cause of his death. Yes, I myself, as often as I have sinned, have done what was the occasion of his death, have

contributed to the cause of his death ; and every time that I sin again, I become guilty of his death. Ah ! how odious should sin appear to me ! But how amiable is he who prays for me when I am the cause of his death ! By his prayer his death, from being my crime, becomes my salvation and my hope.

III. The excuse given in this prayer is ignorance : *for they know not what they do.* Every sin is a compound of malice and ignorance. Our Lord here says nothing of malice, and speaks only of ignorance, because he prays for us and seeks to excuse us. It is true that when I sinned I was very blind, and was far from comprehending all the greatness of the evil I was doing ; but I know enough to be without excuse, and my ignorance was not wholly involuntary. Pardon me then, O my God, according to the prayer which thy Son makes for me upon the cross ! Hear the voice of his blood and of his love. Excuse my past ignorance, and dispel it for the time to come. Make me comprehend what sin is, and give me such a horror of it that I may never be guilty of it any more.

IV. The example contained in this

prayer is the love of our enemies. Our Saviour does here what he has commanded us to do: to love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute us. Let us imitate him in his prayer, if we would partake of the pardon which he asks for us. Let us excuse our persecutors on account of their ignorance or inadvertence, and suppress, dissemble, forgive what cannot be excused. Let us hate iniquity, but let us not hate him who commits it, him for whom Jesus prayed, and for whom he died.

Apply to me, O my divine Saviour, the fruit of this prayer, which had so much power over thy Father's heart; and that I may receive forgiveness from thee for the sins I have committed, grant that I may imitate thee by preserving charity in the midst of sufferings, by forgiving those who have offended me, by excusing them and praying for them, as thou didst for thy tormentors! Amen.

MEDITATION XXXIV.

ON THREE OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES OF
THE CRUCIFIXION. MATT. XXVII.
35—37. MARK XV. 24—26, 27—32.
LUKE XXIII. 35—39. JOHN XIX.
19—24.

FIRST POINT.

On the title of the cross of Jesus.

I. *And Pilate wrote a title, and set upon the cross over his head his accusation written, and the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. And many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.—I rejoice, O my Saviour! that in the midst of thy ignominies thy judge gives thee so honourable a title, and forces thy enemies to read it against their will!*

Yes, thou art Jesus of Nazareth, conceived at Nazareth, born at Bethlehem, and brought up at Nazareth. Thou art the King promised to the Jews, who art to subdue all nations. Thou art the Messiah promised to the world, who art come into the world to save it. Thou art Jesus, the Saviour of mankind. This title is thy crime, is the cause of thy death, and it is by thy death that thou gainest for ever this glorious title. I rejoice that thy judge has written it in three different languages, that all nations may read it, and understand that thou art not only the King of the Jews, but the King of all nations, the King of men and angels; and that every tongue may confess that the Lord Jesus Christ, after having died on a disgraceful cross, is now in the glory of his Father; that thy church, which has in these three tongues the authentic text of thy sacred ordinances, may in these three tongues give to her King the title which he bore on the day in which he made the conquest of his kingdom.

II. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews, but that he said, I am the King of the Jews.—What childishness in the Jews and in their chief priests! What!

make difficulties about a title, after having obtained, through the weakness of the governor, that Jesus should be crucified ! Passion is never content ; a trifle employs, afflicts, and disquiets it. The greater the fury, the more it becomes contemptible by entering into such niceties. Fret, pontiffs and Jews, in vain you controvert this title of Jesus, it will remain, and will be given to him by the whole universe ; he deserves it even for the treatment he receives from you, and the manner in which he bears with it.

III. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.—It is very surprising that Pilate, who had carried his complaisance to the Jews so far as to sacrifice to them his conscience, his judgment, and his reputation, persists in refusing to add a word which must have been to him a matter of little consequence. In the first ages of the church, the Pagans wished to deprive the disciples of Jesus of the name of Christians ; sometimes they called them Galileans, and sometimes changing a letter in their name, they called them in derision Chrestians, which signifies *useful*, hinting thereby that they were *useless* to the world, and a burden to

society. But Providence scatters the counsels of men. Jesus kept his title and his disciples their name; but we, how do we acknowledge in Jesus the title of King, and how do we bear the name of Christians?

SECOND POINT.

On the dividing his clothes.

I. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be.—Jesus is hanging on the cross, and thence observes his executioners seizing his clothes, and dividing his spoils. It is thus that the first Christians, the martyrs saw themselves stripped of their effects with joy, because they knew they possessed more solid goods which their enemies could not take away. Jesus stripped, and seeing his clothes divided under his eyes, was their consolation; and the grace which he obtained for them by this humiliation filled them with courage and fortitude. How unlike are we to our

model, and to the example of the first Christians, who are unwilling to suffer any thing, and who tremble and sometimes prevaricate at the apprehension of hurting our advancement.

II. That the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.—Was there ever a prophecy more literally fulfilled? Can we sufficiently admire this eternal providence of God, who governs all things and knows all things, even the smallest events, and causes them to be foretold many centuries beforehand, in order that, whereas they are of themselves a humiliation and disgrace to his Son, they may, by being thus foretold, add new lustre to his glory.

III. The holy fathers have always considered the robe of Jesus Christ as the figure of the church. The church is that admirable coat without seam, which cannot be cut, from which nothing can be taken away without destroying the whole. The church cannot be divided; it is even speaking improperly to say, that there are divisions in the church, because these divisions are not with regard to points which appertain to faith, or because these divisions are

not in the church, but between the church and those who are no longer its members. The other garments of Jesus Christ divided among the four soldiers, mark the extent of the church, but the robe represents its unity. Let us admire then this proceeding of the soldiers. St. John seems to invite us to it, and to point out the mystery which we are explaining. Like them, let us not attempt to cut or rend it. We may separate ourselves from it for our misfortune; but we cannot divide it, because it will be always in itself one and indivisible.

THIRD POINT.

On the blasphemies uttered against Jesus.—I. *And sitting down they watched him. And they that passed by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, Ah! thou that destroyest the temple of God, and buildest it again in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests with the scribes and elders, mocking him, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have*

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him : for he said, I am the Son of God. And one of the malefactors who were hanging railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.—What cowardice, what malice, what contradiction, what fury in all these blasphemies! How indecent in the people and the judges thus to insult a dying man! He is insulted for a word that he had said, for a word which is maliciously interpreted, and which is actually fulfilled. He is accused of saving others, and of putting his confidence in God : what an accusation! His patience is looked upon as weakness, they defy God himself to deliver him ; and it is the priests, the doctors, and the elders, who utter this blasphemy ! They promise to believe in him, if he will come down from the cross : all the charges then brought against him are false : it is not certain then that he is a seducer, an impious man, a blasphemer, and it is admitted that all these accusations would vanish if he should come down from the cross : but if he does more, if he rises from the tomb after his death, what will become of them ? Not only the priest, the scribes, the senators, and the people insult him, but even the soldiers who are there to guard him and to keep the

peace, even those who undergo the same punishment with him, at least one of the two: the rage was general. Nothing is said to the two thieves, it is only against Jesus that every one inveighs, that every tongue is sharpened with invective, and every mouth abounds with blasphemy.

II. The prophet compares these blasphemers to the most ferocious animals, to untamed bulls, to roaring lions, to furious unicorns. Meanwhile Jesus is silent; neither torments nor ignominies draw from him the smallest complaint. He accomplishes the work of our redemption; he drinks the chalice to the dregs; as a victim he suffers all, and as priest, he prays for all. His spirit is still more humbled before God his Father, and his heart more contrite than his body is mangled, and his honour insulted.

III. Why did Jesus suffer these blasphemies and outrages? 1st, To expiate our pride. Let us comprehend how great is the guilt of our pride, since, to expiate it, it is necessary for Jesus to suffer so many outrages. Let us understand that he suffers them for us and in our place; that it is we who deserve them, we who utter against him so many

blasphemies. 2dly, To destroy our pride, and to obtain for us the grace of meekness, humility, and patience. Without his grace, chastisements and humiliations would have had the same effect upon us as upon the devils, which is, to increase our pride. 3dly, To teach us to subdue our pride. Jesus hearing these blasphemies, insults, and outrages is our model. When then we are attacked with strokes of raillery, contempt, and outrages, let us humble ourselves interiorly, and without losing our temper; let us persevere in the work of our sanctification, and in rendering ourselves like to our Master!

O Jesus, receive me into the number of thy disciples! May thy humiliations on the cross become the subject of my glory and my love! Hide me in thy sacred wounds, let them plead in my behalf; and as thou hast loved me and suffered for me to the last moment of thy mortal life, grant also that I may have the happiness to love thee, and to suffer for thee till the moment of my death! Amen.

MEDITATION XXXV.

**ON THE GOOD THIEF. LUKE xxiii.
40—43.**

FIRST POINT.

I. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou neither fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?—What, wretched fellow-sufferer, near thy end as thou art, thou dost not fear God! Thou imitatatest the inscreants who load this holy man with insults and blasphemies! How admirable is the zeal of this good thief, moved by the virtue, and won no doubt by the meekness of Jesus! His zeal is charitable: he cannot see without concern his companion giving into the error of the people, and about to be lost at a moment so favourable for being saved.

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He endeavours both by words and example to bring him into the right way. His zeal is courageous : when the voices of all are against Jesus, when his enemies triumph, and his apostles are silent, he alone raises his voice, and stems the torrent of abuse which is poured forth against Jesus; for in reproving his companion, he pretty plainly points at the rest by this expression, *Dost not thou neither?* His zeal is enlightened : Thou dost not fear God ! This is the source of all blasphemies. The fear of God restrains the tongue, and checks the precipitancy of judgment. He who fears God is afraid of offending him, of thwarting his designs, of insulting his servants, and still more his Son, the promised Messiah. Jesus gave sufficient proofs of his being the Son of God : if this truth here appears obscured, it is prudent to wait and not decide in haste. It is at all events a horrible blasphemy to say, If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross, save thyself and us. For, if he be the Son of God, it is not for us to prescribe to him what he has to do, but for him to lay his commands upon us. His zeal is urgent : *seeing thou art in the same condemnation;* or, in other words, because he is con-

demned like thee, thou thinkest thyself equal to him ; but there is a sensible difference, even considering only what passes here: and this the good thief is going to explain to him. Ah ! how far are we from having the same zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ and the salvation of our bréthren !

II. We indeed suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.—This is what we ought to say in all our sufferings. Compare ours with those of Jesus; what a difference ! but the infinite difference is, that we are guilty and he is innocent. Although human justice should treat us with too much rigour, although men should punish us unjustly, we have no reason to complain, because we are always indebted to the divine justice, and that we never suffer as much as we have deserved. These words of the good thief imply his repentance and sorrow for having offended God. How salutary would our penance be if we endured the sufferings of this life with the sentiments of the good thief ! But we choose rather to suffer without fruit, with the murmurs, and perhaps with the blasphemies of the bad thief.

III. But this man has done nothing amiss.—The judge declared it on his

tribunal, after having gone through his trial, and the criminal proclaims it from his cross, after having heard his accusers: and this is the difference between them and Jesus, which he remarks to his companion. Against them the accusations are proved, and no insult is offered them; against Jesus no accusation is brought, and he is insulted a hundred different ways. This is not enough: it is admitted that he has done much good, that he has saved others by delivering them from devils, from sickness, and from death; his piety towards God is admitted, since he put his trust in him; but moreover, the patience, the tranquillity, the dignity, which he maintains in torments and in insults, all this accords with the quality of Son of God, which he is said to have given himself, and with the title of King of Israel, which the judge himself gives him. Such are the reflections which the good thief makes in the midst of his sufferings, and which he endeavours to excite in his companion in the midst of this general outcry. To words he adds example.

SECOND POINT.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.—Let us admire here,

I. The faith of the good thief. He acknowledges Jesus for his Saviour and his King in the state when it is least discoverable, and at the time when it is least acknowledged. What do you see then in Jesus, generous confessor of the faith? What power do you remark in him that you should give him the title of Lord? His hands and feet are nailed to the cross. What mark of royalty do you see in him to think he is possessed of a kingdom? He wears only a crown of thorns. What encourages you to proclaim with your mouth Him whom you believe in your heart? The mouths of all are opened only to blaspheme against him. How canst thou say, *When thou comest into thy kingdom*, to a man whom you see ready to expire? Ah! you are aware that his kingdom is not of this world, and that it is by the cross he must enter into it. An inward and supernatural light enlightens you, and you shut not your eyes against it; a powerful grace spurs you on, and you

resist it not : had the Jews had your docility, they had discovered the wisdom of God concealed in the mystery of a God-Man, and had never crucified the King of Glory. Were I myself more docile, more attentive, more recollected, what strength and light should I not gather from the mystery of the cross !

II. His hope. *Remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.* Do you reflect, O good thief ! that he to whom you speak, never, as you have just said, has done evil ; that he is pure and spotless, the Saint of Saints, and that you are a sinner, a criminal whose life has been all disorderly ? Do you reflect that his kingdom is the kingdom of sanctity, that nothing impure and defiled can enter therein, and that you are nothing but sin and uncleanness ? Ought you not rather to wish that he should forget you ; for if he remembers you, ought you not to fear lest it be to exclude from his kingdom, and condemn you to the eternal punishments which your crimes have deserved ? I repent of them, you say, I suffer my punishment in a spirit of penance, and I hope for mercy. But is not your hope presumptuous, your repentance too late, your penance compulsory ? Ah ! sinners, you

to whom God grants yet some moments of recollection before death, yield not to these temptations to despair, which your enemy the devil will not fail to suggest to you. Had you but an instant, all the blood of Jesus Christ is still yours. Imitate the good thief, employ this instant to the best advantage, throw yourselves into the arms of your dying Saviour, hope in his infinite mercies, and your hope will not be confounded. But let not sinners, in order to sin more freely, depend during life upon this goodness of God in hearing those who invoke him only some moments before their death, because it may happen that, like the bad thief, they may not choose to profit of these moments, or that they may never have these moments, like so many sinners who are surprised by death.

III. His love. Doubt not that the good thief loved much, since much was forgiven him. It was in a transport of that love with which his heart was inflamed that he so openly undertook the defence of Jesus, that he imposed silence on those who insulted him, and confounded those who blasphemed him. It was this love which inspired him to make a public confession of his faith,

which supported his hope, and made him invoke with confidence Him, who had been reproached with having in vain put his confidence in God. It was this love which made him cherish his cross, and forget his torments, to think only of his Saviour and of his salvation. Oh ! illustrious penitent, how ardent and efficacious is your love ! Alas ! mine, if I can flatter myself that I have any, how weak, sluggish, timid, and barren is it ! But if I do nothing of that, which love makes you do, can I still flatter myself that I love ?

THIRD POINT.

I. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.—Jesus not only remits sins, which belongs but to a God—not only he justifies the sinner, which belongs but to Him who is the author of sanctity, and the source of all righteousness; but also he determines the destiny of man in another world, opens the gates of life and happiness, introduces therein those who call upon him, and promises them eternal rewards, which belongs only to the absolute Master of heaven and earth—to the Son of God,

equal to his Father, and being only one God with him. If our Lord thus displays so much greatness in the midst of his humiliations and torments, it is not for himself, and for his own deliverance—it is for us, and for the support of our faith ; it is in order that the scandal of his Passion may not make an impression on our hearts, degrade our ideas, or diminish our feelings ; it is in order that we may not lose sight of the sovereign majesty of Him who suffers, and the greatness of the love which makes him suffer for us; it is that we may consider his cross, not solely as the instrument and theatre of his torments, but also as the throne of his power and glory, the trophy of his victory, and the standard of his love.

II. Was it not enough to make this good thief die with joy, though in the midst of acute sufferings, to hear these words, and to receive such a promise confirmed by an oath ! *This day*—without delay, before the day is closed, after a life of crime and a moment of repentance—*shalt thou be with me*—with Jesus, with thy Saviour, not in torments, and on the cross, but—in *Paradise*, in repose and delight—there to await the happy day when thy divine

Master shall enter into the riches of his kingdom, into the supreme felicity of heaven, in order to enter with him there, and to reign with him there for all eternity. When this penitent thief saw Jesus die, how ardently did he desire to die himself! not to be delivered from his torment, nor even to enjoy Paradise, but, like St. Paul, to be with Jesus Christ. With what patience does he endure the remainder of his punishment! With what joy did he see his bones broken to hasten his death, and, at the same time, his happiness! Is not the same happiness promised to us? Why then so little courage to merit it, and so little desire to possess it? But we shall say, perhaps, the good thief was secure of possessing it; and if we were assured of it, what would we not do? we would think only of this happiness—we would labour only to render ourselves more and more worthy of it! Well, let us do all this, and we shall be secure.

III. What Jesus did for the penitent thief was not for him alone; it is an example which Jesus gives us of his clemency and infinite mercy, whatever sins we may have committed, and whatever length of time we may have perse-

vered in sin. We see how great was the confidence of the good thief, and how great was his success. Jesus bound himself by an oath; let us depend upon this adorable and immutable oath. Our diffidence or excessive fear would wound our Saviour's love for us, and would be a kind of blasphemy against the truth which he attests. Alas! we are all sinners, and we are sensible of it, particularly at the hour of death. If we look only to our own lives, we must give ourselves up to despair. Let us forget then all the past, and, after doing what depends on us, think only of Jesus dying and shedding his blood for us. If Jesus is a God without mercy, we are lost: if we believe that he is without mercy, we blaspheme; but if he is the God of mercies—if he delights to shew mercy to the greatest sinners—if he has assured us of this both by words and actions, let us throw ourselves into the arms of his infinite mercy, and drown in his blood both our sins and the diffidence they inspire.

O good thief, join thy prayers to ours, to obtain for us grace to die like thee, and to be, like thee, after our death, with Jesus, our Redemer, in the eternal abode of his glory! Amen.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

ON THE THREE MARYS AND ST. JOHN
AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS. JOHN
xix. 25—27.

FIRST POINT.

I. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.*—It was not merely from a sentiment of compassion that Mary, mother of Jesus, had penetrated to the foot of the cross: she came there in a spirit of faith, and to co-operate with the divine mysteries which were then performing. She only on the earth was in the secret. She knew that her Son had no father on the earth—that he was the Son of God—the Word of God made man. She knew, by the words which the angel had told her on the day of her annunciation, that her Son was to save

his people, and deliver them from their sins—that he was to reign, and that of his kingdom there would be no end. She knew, by the words which Simeon had said to her on the day of her purification, that her Son would become a sign to be contradicted, and that her own soul would be pierced with a sword of sorrow. She knew, by the words which her Son himself had often repeated, that he was to be delivered up, insulted, and crucified—that he was to die, and rise again the third day. Mary lost none of these words; she meditated upon them, she compared them in her heart, and she saw the accomplishment of them before her eyes. The scandal of the cross, which darkened, staggered, and weakened the faith of others, strengthened her's. The whole deposit of faith was possessed by Mary. All that the apostles have preached since—all that the martyrs have signed with their blood—all that the councils have explained or defined, was even then known to Mary. O Mary, you are blessed, because you have believed!

II. Never did a mother—never did any pure creature suffer so painful a martyrdom as Mary. What were her

feelings, when she saw the state to which her Son was brought by his tormentors ; when she heard the strokes of the hammer driving the nails into his hands and feet ; when she saw him lifted up on the cross, and hanging by his wounds ; when, in fine, she saw her Son, in a state so worthy of compassion, receiving nothing but outrages and insults, and becoming to all the people an object of malediction and horror ! O mother of sorrows, what a sword pierces your soul ! what faith, what strength, what constancy supports you from falling under so unheard-of and dreadful a torment !

III. Mary is here in the place of the church. She immolates her Son to God by the bloody sacrifice of the cross, as the church does and will immolate him to the end of ages by the unbloody sacrifice of the altar. She immolates him and herself with him by partaking of his sorrow and ignominies—by entering into all the views of his Father's wisdom, which requires this great sacrifice. She immolates him to repair the glory of God—to deliver man from slavery, and to restore him to justice and immortality. As she shares in the sorrows of her Son, she shares also in

his sentiments of respect, obedience, annihilation before the supreme Majesty, and in his sentiments of the most ardent charity for men. To these, she adds sentiments of the tenderest love, and the most lively gratitude, for her Son and Saviour. Let us enter into her views and her sentiments, particularly when we assist at the holy sacrifice of the mass, which is no other than that of the cross. Let us then reflect on Mary at the foot of the cross, and make her our model.

SECOND POINT.

I. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son!—If St. John testified his love for Jesus by joining his mother, and standing with her at the foot of the cross, Jesus on his side shewed his love to his disciple by giving him to his mother for her son. But let us understand the mystery of this: St. John here represents all Christians, and it is us all that Jesus here gives as sons to his mother; and it is, perhaps, on that account, that St. John is not here designed by his name, but by that

of—the disciple whom Jesus loved. Now, without infringing upon the singular prerogative of St. John, we are all disciples of Jesus, and disciples that he has loved so as to shed his blood for us. Jesus, by giving us as sons to his mother, unites himself to us in an indissoluble manner. He does not say, in speaking of St. John, I give you here a second son to supply my place; but simply, *Behold thy son.* Jesus is in us, and we are in Jesus: we make with him but one son, one Christ, one body, of which he is the head, and we the members. With him we make but one son of Mary, one Son of God: he, the natural and consubstantial Son; we, adoptive sons, making but one with him, to make but one with God. In fine, Jesus does not give to Mary the name of mother, but that of woman; and here again is another mystery. For as he never called himself otherwise than Son of Man, to make us understand that he is the Son promised to the first man, who was to crush the serpent's head; so he never called Mary otherwise than by the name of woman, to shew that she was the woman foretold from the beginning of the world, who was to give birth to this Son. It becomes us then, as

adoptive brothers of Jesus Christ, to shew ourselves worthy of our origin, of our new birth, of our adoption, by crushing the serpent's head, by being in eternal enmity with him, and holding sentiments in all things opposite to his.

II. *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!*—Jesus is not content with saying to his mother, directing his eyes to him who stood by her, *Behold thy son*; he adds, speaking to the disciple, *Behold thy mother*—that, the gift being mutual, their sentiments of love and confidence might be mutual also. O what a gift does Jesus bestow upon us by this solemn testamentary arrangement! O Mary, queen of heaven! I have then a right, I am allowed to say, I am thy son, and thou art my mother.

III. *And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*—When Jesus had breathed his last—when he was taken down from the cross, and put into the tomb, St. John conducted the blessed virgin to his own home; and wherever he went afterwards the blessed virgin lodged always with him as his mother, and he respected, loved, served her, took care of her as her son. Let us also discharge the duties of a son towards Mary, by a profound respect,

a tender love, a filial confidence, and an entire conformity to her wishes and inclinations. She is a virgin—St. John was a virgin; it is by purity we must seek to please her. The blessed virgin will dwell in our house, if all is chaste there, and breathes nothing but purity. If we behave to her as docile and respectful sons, she will shew herself our mother in effect, by protecting in a sensible manner all that belongs to us, by chosen and abundant graces, by a speedy succour in dangers and temptations, and a special assistance in the hour of death.

THIRD POINT.

On Mary Magdalen, and Mary, her companion.

I. As we see here these two holy women united, we shall find them inseparable hereafter. They employed themselves, during our Saviour's life, in serving him; after his death, they will be solicitous only to pay him the last duties. Happy union, which tends only to the love of Jesus and the practice of good works!

II. Mary Magdalen had not contracted marriage: she was her own mis-

tress ; and from the time that Jesus delivered her from the seven devils with which she was possessed, she consecrated herself and all that she had to the service of her divine Deliverer. Her love for him, and her courage and zeal in his service, distinguished her among all the other holy women who followed Jesus. St. Peter, amongst the apostles, is always named the first ; in like manner, amongst the holy women, Mary Magdalen is always named the first, except on this occasion, when the most holy mother of Jesus was of the company. The other Mary was sister of St. Joseph, and consequently sister-in-law of the blessed virgin. She had a son amongst the apostles : she had espoused Cleophas, otherwise called Alpheus, by whom she had two sons, James and Joseph—the first of whom is the apostle St. James, surnamed the Less.

III. Mary Magdalen and Mary of Cleophas stationed themselves at first at a distance from the cross, with the other women of Galilee who followed Jesus. But when they saw Mary, mother of Jesus, advance to the foot of the cross, they followed her as well from attachment to her as from love for

Jesus, for they always considered Jesus as their Master and the King of Israel. It is true that they were astonished, as well as the apostles, at the state in which they saw him. They had not understood any more than the latter what he had told them of his Passion, of his death, and of his resurrection. But if the scandal of the cross astonished them, it did not overthrow them ; if it darkened their faith it did not destroy it, and it augmented their tenderness and love.—Jesus, for the time being, was satisfied with these dispositions, which were soon to be perfected, and recompensed by new favours, and by the glory of his resurrection.

O holy women, who were in company with blessed Mary and the disciple that Jesus loved, at the foot of the cross of this divine Saviour, and were present at his last words and his last breath, who also were the first to see him risen again, and to announce his resurrection to the apostles themselves, solicit for us some spark of your ardent love for Jesus, of your faithful attachment to his divine mother. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

**ON THE MIRACULOUS DARKNESS AND
TWO OF THE WORDS OF JESUS ON
THE CROSS. MATT. XXVII. 45—49.
MARK XV. 23—36. LUKE XXIII. 44,
45. JOHN XIX. 28, 29.**

FIRST POINT.

I. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened.—This darkness was not the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun, because it happened on the festival of the Passover, which, by the command of God, who gave the whole law with a view to Jesus Christ, was kept at the full of the moon. The sun therefore itself was darkened, so as to give no light, though at Jerusalem it was

noon day, or at most a pale and feeble light, just enough to distinguish one object from another. The Jews, whose minds were overwhelmed with still greater darkness, understood not the reason of so astonishing a miracle, and considering it as the effect of some natural cause, continued in their blindness, and persisted in accomplishing their crimes.

II. This darkness overspread at the same time all the earth, the whole terrestrial globe. This must have been the case, as the sun itself was darkened. This darkness was sensible to all the earth; for the hemisphere in which the sun was, was deprived of its light, and the opposite hemisphere was deprived of the light of the moon, which was no longer enlightened by the sun. Though few paid attention to it, this event is nevertheless mentioned in some Pagan authors, in the archives of the Roman empire, and the ephemerides of China. This prodigy disposed the Gentiles to receive the gospel, and the gospel, in representing to them this event, explained to them the mystery it contained, and gave them to understand that they had hitherto lived in darkness, from which they had been delivered by

the cross and by the death of the Master of the universe.

III. This darkness lasted three hours, precisely during the time that Jesus lived upon the cross from the sixth hour till the ninth hour, when he died, that is to say, from noon till three o'clock. A cotemporary Pagan author says, that the obscurity was so great at noon-day that the stars might be seen. Thus nature seemed to take part in the sufferings of its Author, or rather the Author of nature dignified the humiliations of his sufferings by the most extraordinary prodigy that ever happened. The Jews had asked our Saviour for a prodigy in the heavens; here is one beyond all that they could have imagined, and what is more wonderful, one that had been foretold in express terms, the prophecy of which would have always passed for a figurative and metaphorical expression, if this great event had not really come to pass.

SECOND POINT.

I. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken*

me?—This is the fourth word of Jesus upon the cross. By the first he asked of God to forgive his tormentors; by the second he granted pardon to the good thief; by the third, he entrusted his Mother to St. John; and by this he warns us to consider how much our redemption has cost him: for, says St. John, these words are less a complaint than an instruction. Our Saviour does not speak thus to be delivered, but to make us understand the rigour of divine justice, which required that he should not be delivered, but that he should be given up to all the fury of his enemies, to torments, insults, and death. He complains, not of being destitute of help, but of being obliged to die; and if he complains of it, it is not but what he had accepted of it, had consented to it, was fully sensible of the equity, the charity, the wisdom of this irrevocable order of the justice of God, but he complains, that we may understand how rigorous this order is, how much it costs him, how much it ought to cost us ourselves to execute it. He complains of it to teach us that a tender respectful complaint is not forbidden us, provided it be joined to a perfect submission, and an entire fidelity in bearing

with the trials which God sends us. Finally, he complains in order by his complaint to obtain for us grace to imitate the example he has given us, and never to complain but like him. He cries out, he raises his voice in order to awaken us from our lethargy, and to inculcate to us strongly this important lesson ; in order to teach us to fear God, to humble ourselves under his almighty hand, and to accept all the pains of this mortal life, and death itself, with resignation, and in atonement for our sins.

II. This complaint, so well calculated for our instruction, served only to increase the humiliation of Jesus, and seemed to confirm the reproach made to him of having in vain put his trust in God. This complaint perhaps has given us ourselves sometimes dangerous impressions which we could hardly help giving way to ; but let us open the Book of Psalms ; let us read the twenty-first Psalm, and we shall there see with admiration not only this complaint, but the very words of this complaint put into the mouth of the Messiah by the prophet : we shall see that the Messiah there declares the reason why he abandoned himself to the discretion of his

enemies, and that our sins which he has taken upon himself cry for vengeance, and forbid his deliverance. We shall there see that it is not in the day of his Passion that he is to be heard and delivered, but in the night of the tomb. We shall there see the very terms of the blasphemies that were here uttered against him. We shall there see his hands and feet pierced, his bones dislocated, and his garments divided. But what is still more admirable, we shall there see his resurrection, the preaching of the gospel, the establishment of the church, the union of the faithful at the same table, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the perpetuity of the faith. Our Lord, by citing the first words of the psalm on his cross, intended thereby to direct us to the prophet, in order to learn that this his dereliction had been foretold, and was only the literal accomplishment of the prophecy; to learn that the fruit of this dereliction would be the foundation of the church, and of all the purity and sanctity we see therein. This single word of our Saviour, joined to the rest of the psalm which he quotes, proves the divinity of his person, of his sufferings, and of his religion.

III. Some of them that stood by, when

they heard that, said, Behold, he calleth for Elias.—The coming of Elias has been often a cause of error for Jews and heretics. But the Elias whom the Jews expected was already come, it was John the Baptist ; and the Elias that heretics expect, will not overthrow the order of hierarchy established by Jesus Christ, and will not justify their obstinate resistance to the decision of the church.

THIRD POINT.

I. After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.—Thirst is one of the greatest torments that can be endured. The thirst of Jesus must have been excessive, after so much suffering and loss of blood. He suffered this torment to expiate our intemperance, to encourage us to endure fasting, and to suffer hunger and thirst for his sake. What a shocking contrast! Jesus on the cross tormented with thirst, and a Christian at table, abandoning himself to excesses horrible to nature! Besides this natural thirst, Jesus suffered a spiritual thirst, which was for our salvation, for our sanctification, for our perfection. Let us believe.

his sufferings by our fidelity to his grace, and not augment them by our infidelities.

II. *I thirst.*—This is the fifth word of Jesus on the cross. It is easy to remark in the four first words of which we have spoken, the greatness, the dignity, the tranquillity of him who speaks them, his clemency in forgiving, his power in granting petitions, his goodness in making his last dispositions, his wisdom in quoting the titles of his justification: but in this we should discover nothing but sorrow and complaint, had not the evangelist informed us why Jesus uttered it. It was neither to complain of the burning thirst which consumed him, nor to procure for himself any relief; it was to accomplish a passage in the prophecy, which otherwise could not have been fulfilled. This passage is in the sixty-eighth Psalm, *In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* It was necessary for the accomplishment of this prophecy, that vinegar should be presented to Jesus in his thirst, and this thirst could only be known by his own declaration. Let us then represent to ourselves Jesus, who from his cross master of times and events, contemplates the series of the

Scriptures, and revolves in his mind all the prophecies which relate to his Passion, sees that they are all accomplished but one, speaks a word, and causes it to be accomplished. Is there any thing greater or more divine? Is not this to suffer and die like a God?

III. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and straightway one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar; and putting it on a reed with hyssop round it, they gave him to drink. Others said, Stay; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.—A branch of hyssop could not have carried the sponge, and on the other hand the sponge could not be fastened to the reed without squeezing out a great part of the liquor; we must then suppose that the soldier fastened several branches of hyssop to one end of the reed, and placed the sponge full of vinegar in the midst of this bunch of hyssop. We see here an extraordinary stroke of Providence. Hyssop was employed at the first Passover, at the first deliverance of the Hebrews, and it was used in all the expiatory sacrifices. If we find it here at the true Passover, at the general deliverance, at the universal expiation of all sins, it is to let us see the relation

between the old covenant and the new, and that the first was but a figure of the second. Let us ask with the prophet to be sprinkled with this hyssop, and washed in the blood of the Lamb that was slain to establish the new covenant. It is not surprising that a vessel of vinegar was at hand, as vinegar diluted with water was the drink of the soldiers and day-labourers; but it is surprising that the Son of God should please to have no other drink upon the cross to quench his thirst; it is still more surprising that this circumstance should have been so clearly foretold by the prophet: *They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst gave me vinegar to drink.* This whole prophecy was fulfilled upon Mount Calvary, the first part before the crucifixion, when wine mingled with myrrh was presented to our Lord. The prophet calls this mixture meat, because it was not intended to quench the thirst, but to strengthen the body. The second part is accomplished here a moment before our Lord's death. What must we think, after this, of our delicacy, niceness, and sensuality, in eating and drinking?

Thou art pleased, O my Saviour, to drink and drain to the dregs the cup of

humiliations and sorrows which thy Father has presented to thee ! How can I behold what my excesses have cost thee, and not be excited to punish them myself ? Grant, O my God, that suffering with thee, in expiation of my criminal satisfactions, I may learn to suffer like thee, and that I may merit the effects of thy mercy while I satisfy thy justice by the merits of thy sufferings ! Amen

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

ON THE TWO LAST WORDS AND DEATH
OF JESUS CHRIST. MATT. XXVII. 50.
MARK XV. 17. LUKE XXIII. 46. JOHN
XIX. 30.

FIRST POINT.

I. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.*—That is to say, all the oracles of the prophets concerning my person, my life and death, are accomplished; every point of the law, all its ordinances, all its figures, are fulfilled; every will of my Father is executed; all the price of man's ransom is paid; all the work of redemption, of atonement, of the justification of man, is finished; all the rage of the infernal spirits is exhausted, all my torments are at an end, my sacrifice is accepted, the holocaust is consummated, my victory is complete; nothing

remains but to die. I rejoice, O my Saviour, that thou art arrived so gloriously at the end of thy immense labours! I applaud thy victory; but what return of thanks can I make to thee? For in fine, it is for us thou hast conquered, hast suffered, hast obeyed, hast sacrificed thyself; it is for us that thou pronouncest this word, *It is finished*, that it may penetrate our hearts, that it may encourage us not to fear the rigour of thy judgments, that it may inflame us with love, and be to us an example.

II. A Christian at the hour of death ought to be able to say with Jesus Christ, *It is finished*. I have fought according to my strength, I have completed my course, I have preserved my faith, I am attached to the church and I die in her bosom; I have observed the law of God, I have done what he commanded me, I have avoided what he forbid me; I have embraced the state of life to which he called me, I have discharged the duties he imposed upon me, I have loved him above all things, and my neighbour as myself; I have submitted to the trials which he sent me, and received both prosperity and adversity from his hand with resignation and thanksgiving: if I offended him I

asked his pardon, and I pardoned all those who offended me, in order that he might pardon me; if I defiled myself with sin, I washed myself in the blood of my Saviour, and in the sacrament of penance; if there remain any debt for me to pay, my Saviour has paid for me; I unite my sufferings to his, my sacrifice to his; all my trust is in him alone; I have received the last pledge of his love, and the last remedy for sin; I have now only to die, and willingly I die for him. Ah! what ought we not to do to put ourselves in a condition to think and speak thus at the hour of death? Happy the death that terminates such a life, and is closed in such sentiments!

III. The sinner, at the close of his life, may say this word, applying it to a different object, *It is finished*; pleasures, honours, riches, luxury, grandeur, amusements, feasts, and entertainments, all is over, all is at an end; body, soul, talents, strength, health, relations, friends, all is lost. I have employed all to the purposes of sin, *it is finished*, nothing but sin remains to me. Fool that I was, I attached myself to transitory goods, and they have passed away; to perishable pleasures, and they are fled; to temporal greatness, and time is

now at an end ; and with it all is at an end, nothing remains but eternity. I die, and in dying I lose all that I had sought after, death tears me from all that I had loved. I die, and I enter into an abyss which is unknown to me, wherein I have no guide but my despair, wherein I can find only a terrible judgment, and torments without end. O my God ! what a death ! but on the other hand, what a life ! Let us avoid the one, if we would not experience the other.

SECOND POINT.

I. And he cried again with a loud voice, and said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.—It is incumbent on the sinner, as well as on the just man, one day to surrender his soul into the hands of God. The body comes from the earth, it must be restored to the earth ; the spirit comes from God, and it must return to God. God has given us a soul, it is now in our hands, we may do with it what we please ; we may make it a slave to the senses, to the pleasures of the world, to the love of earthly things ; we may defile it with crimes, abandon it to vice, blind it in

error, harden it in sin. We may, on the contrary, with the help of divine grace, exercise it in good, and preserve it from evil; raise it up towards heaven, unite it to God, fill it with his love. purify it more and more, sanctify and perfect it; but whichever side we take, whatever use we make of our soul, the time will come at length when we must return it to its creator. Do we reflect seriously on this truth? Does this truth make an impression on us? Ah! let us hear our Saviour, who cries out to us from the cross, that what he is doing for us, we must one day do ourselves!

II. Jesus resigns his soul into the hands of God.—We shall also resign ours into his hands. Powerful hands! out of which no one can deliver us, and from which we can withdraw ourselves no more. Eternal power! which will fix our soul for eternity, and determine its lot and its mansion for ever. Equitable hands! which will distribute to each of us reward or punishment, according to his works. Liberal and bounteous hands! which will reward beyond all that we can conceive: but terrible hands likewise, which will punish beyond all that we can imagine!

Do we reflect that we are soon to fall into these divine hands? How then do we prepare ourselves for it?

III. Jesus resigns into the hands of God his Father his pure and holy soul.—The words here uttered by our Saviour are what we ourselves ought to say at the approach of death—what we ought to say every night before we abandon ourselves to sleep—what we ought to repeat on different occasions in life, and often during the day; but when we say them, let us think on the state of our soul. Our Lord resigns his soul pure and holy. In what state is ours, that we should dare to resign it into the hands of the God of purity and sanctity? O Jesus! this thought makes me shudder, and would cast me into despair, if I did not know that thou art my Saviour—if I did not know that, in recommending thy soul to thy Father, thou hast recommended to him mine also. Thou utteredst this word with a strong voice, to intimate to me that I was included therein, and that I might say, after thee, Father, I commend my soul to thee; I resign it into thy hands, together with the soul of my Saviour, thy beloved Son, who has redeemed it, and washed it with his

blood. Impressed with this lively hope, and pronouncing this tender name of Father, by which thou hast ordered me to address thee, I will expect in peace the moment when it shall please thee to call me hence—I will go to thee, depending on thy mercies and merits, and in the hope that thou wilt place me with thee in the glory which thou hast promised us.

THIRD POINT.

I. And he cried out again with a loud voice and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.—St. Matthew and St. Mark speak only of Jesus having cried out, without mentioning what he said. It is probable that this cry was only the strong and powerful voice with which he pronounced these last words, related by St. Luke, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* However this may be, this cry, this strength shew at least that he did not die through necessity, but freely, and by choice. What he had suffered at Jerusalem and Mount Calvary was naturally more than enough to deprive him of life. The sadness which overwhelmed him in the Garden of Olives, and the sweat of

blood which was the consequence of it, were alone sufficient to occasion his death. But neither torments, nor weakness, nor loss of blood could cause the Saviour of the world to die without his consent. He could in a moment have collected all his strength, healed all his wounds, and delivered himself from his enemies. This is pointed out to us by the strength which he here displays, and by the loud voice with which he pronounces his last words. If, after having uttered them, he expires, it is because it is his will; if he bows his head, it is to mark his submission to his Father's orders; if he gives up the ghost, it is of himself, without being compelled to it, and reserving the power to resume it on the day he had appointed.

II. Jesus, the dead, is not vanquished; he is victorious. It is by his death that he conquered the prince of death—that he robbed death of its sting—that he destroyed sin—that he repaired the injury done to God—that he shut up hell, and opened Paradise—that he acquired all power in heaven and on earth, the right of judging the living and the dead, and of decreeing eternal punishments or rewards.

III. It is not for himself that he died, that he triumphed, that he conquered —it is for us. Jesus by his death completed the work of our redemption, regenerated us to life, and restored to us our right to immortality. It is from the death of Jesus that all the sacraments draw their virtue, either to give us the life of grace, or to increase it. The death of Jesus has changed the nature of our death; it was purely a punishment due to our disobedience: united now to that of Jesus Christ, it becomes a voluntary sacrifice, the greatest and most agreeable that we can make to God: it was surrounded with uncertainties and fears, which spread a gloom over our whole lives, it becomes a day of consolation, a passage from a life of misery to a life of bliss, from a temporal life to a life eternal, and this hope supports us during the whole course of this life, softens its labours and sufferings, and inflames it with holy desires. If the tomb still inspires us with horror, the thought that Jesus went down into it, and came forth glorified, encourages us. If we seem to be entering upon a darksome path, and going to a place unknown, we know that Jesus our Saviour walked therein and

went thither, that he reigns there, and that he is our guide, our support, and our recompense. Finally, if death has its pains, if it is not quite divested of its terrors, the death of Jesus strengthens us, and teaches us to bow our head with submission, and to expire with love.

O death of Jesus! how great a mystery art thou of faith and of love! I believe, O my God, that thou hast died for me; and how have I hitherto lived without loving thee! *All is finished* on thy part by the exact fidelity thou hast shewn in being obedient in all things, and by thy charitable thirst for our salvation. *All is finished* with regard to the good which thou designest to do us, and the sufferings to which thou art subjected. *All is finished*; the mystery of love, piety, and charity on thy part, the mystery of iniquity on the part of thy enemies. Their malice could go no farther than to put thee to death, thy love could not display itself more than by dying for us. What return shall I make to thee for so valuable a favour? Ah! suffer me not, O Lord, to go out of this life without having proved my love to thee by my fidelity, without thy

having accomplished in me the designs
of thy mercy ! Grant that, during the
whole course of my life, I may have a
true thirst for thy glory and for my sal-
vation ; grant, above all, that I may die
with more love than fear, and that I may
say to thee with filial confidence, *Fa-
ther, I commend my spirit into thy hands!*
Amen.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

ON THE PRODIGIES WHICH HAPPENED
AT THE DEATH OF JESUS. MATT.
XXVII. 51—56. MARK XV. 38—41.
LUKE XXIII. 47—49.

FIRST POINT.

And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. —This veil was made of precious stuffs, and was of exquisite workmanship. It separated that part of the tabernacle which was called the holy of holies, in which was the ark of the covenant. It was only lawful for the high priest to enter into this sanctuary, and that only once in the year, on the day of expiation and after great preparation, all under pain of death. Jesus expired during the time of the evening sacrifice, and it

was at that moment that the veil was rent with great noise and publicity by an invisible hand. The priest who was in office, and who immolated the lamb, was a witness of this prodigy, which must have filled them with terror ; he did not conceal the fact from the other priest, nor from the people ; and when the evangelist wrote it, no one dared to contradict it. The veil being rent signified three things : 1st, That the sanctuary, the tabernacle, the temple, and the sacrifices therein offered were rejected by God, and were to give place to the singular sacrifice of a God immolated on the cross ; and it is for this that the prophet, after foretelling that the sun would be darkened at noon-day, and that the day of the Lord would be a day of darkness and not of light, adds immediately afterwards, in speaking of the Jews, that the Lord had rejected their solemnities and sacrifices : 2d, that the veil which covered the ancient worship was taken away, because the figures which it contained were fulfilled and explained by the mysteries of the Passion and death of a God : 3d, that heaven, which is the holy of holies, and the true sanctuary of the divinity, is at length opened to us by the blood of a

Redeemer, after having been shut for so many ages. Ah! how happy are we to live under the reign of this divine Saviour, and to know that he is in heaven, and that he has opened heaven for us!

SECOND POINT.

I. And the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened.— What a spectacle for the deicide Jews ! Here is the answer to their blasphemies, and the justification of him whom they insulted, as having in vain put his trust in God. It is true that this justification comes not till after his death. It is not till after death that we may expect ours ; it will be so much the more remarkable. The earth trembles with horror at the crime of the Jews ! Alas ! how can it bear to carry me after all the crimes which I have committed ? The rocks are split, and while the disciples remain silent, seem to reproach the Jews for their hardness of heart ! Alas ! do they not reproach me for mine ? The graves are opened, to mark the victory which Jesus, our life, has gained over death ; Oh, that the tombs of our consciences, defiled by so many vices, were also opened ! It is time that we should rise

from the grave of sin to partake in the glorious resurrection of our Saviour! Whilst the cross of Jesus remains on the earth, all these prodigies invite us to repentance. When this cross shall appear in heaven, these prodigies will be renewed, but solely for the despair of the wicked and for the glory of the righteous.—Of which number are we?

II. And many bodies of the saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many.—Jesus having conquered death, descended into hell, and began to let the just taste the first fruits of their deliverance. Perhaps the reprobate felt then more than ever their unhappy reprobation: at least the devils were sensible of their defeat; but the righteous, who had lived by faith in the promises, and in the exact observance of the law of God, saw with transports of delight their captivity ended, and their hopes fulfilled. Jesus, their Saviour and Sovereign Master, chose a certain number amongst them to accompany him in his corporal resurrection, and afterwards to accompany him in body and soul into heaven; while the rest should accompany him to heaven in soul only. It was in the ip-

terval between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ that these saints, raised from the dead, appeared to many at Jerusalem, as Jesus their head appeared to his disciples. These apparitions served greatly to strengthen the faith of the true believers, and they ought also to confirm ours, and to animate our hope, since the resurrection of these saints is the model and the pledge of ours.

THIRD POINT.

I. How was it that the priests, the elders, the scribes, and pharisees could behold so many prodigies without being terrified, moved, converted? Alas! how is it at this day that Jews, infidels, and heretics, can see the majesty and stability of the Catholic religion without being moved? When prejudice darkens the understanding, and passion besets the heart, we do not wish to see, and we do not see. Proofs are changed into difficulties, facts into scandals, and remedies into poisons.

II. And when the Centurion who stood over against him saw that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous

man. And when they that were watching Jesus with him saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.—The loud cry alone which Jesus uttered in dying convinces the Centurion that it is the Son of God who expires, and expires only because it is his will. All the other prodigies confirm him in this opinion. He declares that Jesus is a righteous man and the Son of God. All the band of soldiers under his command, penetrated with religious awe, think and speak like him; it is at the foot of the cross, whilst the dead Jesus remained nailed to it, that they make their profession of faith, without being scandalized at the ignominy of the punishment, or at the state of weakness to which Jesus was brought, or at the state of death in which they now see him. We may say of this Centurion what Jesus said of another, that so much faith was not found in Israel.

III. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts.—Those who had come to the execution of Jesus as to a spectacle, who were no wise interested in the matter, who had perhaps, after the example

of others, insulted the King of Israel on the cross, changed their opinion as soon as he had expired, when they saw the prodigies which followed his death. They reproached themselves with having assisted at the death of the just man, and having considered his execution as an amusement, an object of curiosity, and perhaps of ridicule. *They returned, smiting their breasts.* What will they not do, when the resurrection of Jesus is announced to them, when the mystery of his Passion is explained to them? What ought not we to do, we who are acquainted with this mystery, who know that for us it was wrought, and that our sins caused the death of the just man; we who have so often assisted at the holy sacrifice, which is the representation of his death, in a manner so indecent and so offensive to heaven? Ah! let us smite our breasts at least with a sincere sorrow for our sins, and implore his clemency whom we have offended!

IV. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things: among whom were Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the Less and

of Joseph, and Salome the mother of Zebedee's children, who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him, and many other women who came up with him into Jerusalem.—What St. Matthew and St. Mark say here of Mary Magdalen, and of Mary mother of James and Joseph, and spouse of Cleophas, does not mean that they kept at a distance with the other women, but only that they were of the number of those who waited upon Jesus, and who had followed him out of Galilee; which is not at variance with what St. John says, that these two holy women were near the cross with Mary, mother of Jesus, and the beloved disciple. Or, if we supposed that at first they kept at a distance with the others, this was no hindrance to their drawing near to the cross afterwards with St. John, in order to accompany the blessed Virgin. This then was their station when these prodigies happened. It is not doubted that the apostles and the disciples of Jesus were included amongst those whom St. Luke designates as being *the acquaintance of Jesus*. All this pious band of both sexes had assisted at the crucifixion of Jesus, with hearts full of

sorrow and compassion ; they knew well that Jesus was a righteous man, and they believed him to be the Son of God : but his execution overthrew all their ideas, and destroyed all their hopes. Nothing remained to them but their love, which fixed them to the spot without knowing what would be the end of so bloody a tragedy. They saw this man of miracles reduced to the last degree of weakness, the Son of God abandoned by his Father, and given up to the fury of his enemies ; this man, formidable to the devils themselves, now exposed to the contempt and insults of the dregs of the people. But what a surprise ! The moment he expires all nature is convulsed, heaven and earth undertake his defence ; those who guarded him, those who insulted him, are seized with terror, and find no security but in a speedy repentance. Ah ! how consoling to the friends of Jesus were these prodigies, so terrifying to all the rest ! Let us love, let us follow, let us serve Jesus, and await the end. Eternal terror will be the lot of his enemies, eternal consolation will be ours.

Grant, O Jesus, that, animated by a solid and steady purity, I may remain

faithfully attached to thee, when to appear in thy interests shall be only a subject of confusion in the eyes of man ! Ah ! may I not only be faithful to thee before men, but give thee life for life, by consecrating all the days of my life to thy love, in order to return it to thee when called for, as a sacrifice which I owe to thee ! Amen.

MEDITATION XL.

ON THE SIDE OF JESUS BEING PIERCED.
JOHN xix. 31—37.

FIRST POINT.

I. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath), that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*—The day of preparation was what we call Friday, the eve of the Sabbath, or Saturday. Servile works were forbidden on festival days; but so rigorously on the Saturday, that it was not lawful on that day to do any thing of the kind, not even to dress victuals; this was to be done on the eve, which

was therefore called the Parasceve, or preparation. Now the Saturday which followed the death of Jesus was a great Sabbath, because it fell during the time of the solemnity of the Passover. Dead bodies hanging on crosses would have appeared disgraceful, and disturbed the joy of the festival. It was therefore necessary to remove them on the Friday, of which there were only three hours remaining, and on this account to hasten the death of the criminals, as was customary among the Romans, by breaking their legs. *Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.* Jesus by his death had anticipated the impatience of the Jews. God was pleased that the body of his Son should preserve its members whole and entire, and that this temple, in which, though dissolved, the fulness of the Divinity still resided, should not experience any fracture or injury in the solid parts of its divine structure. But how came the soldiers to pass from the first criminal to the third? Was not Jesus in the middle? When they came to Jesus, why did they stop to consider

whether or no he was dead? Why, because he was dead, did they omit to execute the orders they had received? O Providence of God, how wonderful art thou! Men follow their own ideas; some beseech, some command, others obey; but all has a reference to thy designs, and nothing goes beyond them.

II. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.—No reasonable motive can be found for the action of this soldier, and it was only an all-wise Providence that directed his hand. Why did he pierce the side of Jesus? Did he suppose him to be alive? No; in this case he should have broken his legs like the others. Did he think he was dead? But in this case there was no impropriety in complying with the orders he had received, and there was much in doing what had not been enjoined him. For by breaking the legs of Jesus like the rest, he discharged the orders given him; the rest did not concern him, and he was not answerable for it. Not only this soldier does different from what he is ordered, but none of the others find fault with it, or undertake to supply his omission. Thus all the solicitude of the Jews, all the

orders of the governor, all the eagerness of the soldiers, ends in doing solely what God would have them to do, because such is the sovereign will which every thing obeys, and nothing resists.

III. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. But these things were done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again, another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.—Yes, we believe it, O holy Apostle, who art soon to be an Evangelist, and wert stationed by a particular Providence at the foot of the cross, to see all and publish it to the universe! We doubt not the truth of thy testimony, and we admire with thee the perfect accomplishment of these two prophecies! Had the soldiers gone forth from Pilate with order, and on purpose to fulfil them, they could not have succeeded better. But they had no knowledge of them; they came with an order and a purpose quite contrary, and yet they fulfilled them. Obtain for us, beloved disciple, grace to understand the mysteries concealed under facts so singular and so important!

SECOND POINT.

I. The heart is the seat of love. Jesus is not contented with giving us his heart by suffering and dying for us, he desires also that this heart should be laid open to us, that we should see it pouring forth the last drops of his blood shed for us, that we should read there the excess of his ardent love, that we should enter therein as into a furnace of charity, to melt the icy coldness of our own hearts, to burn with love, to transform ourselves into him, and to breathe only the sacred fire of his divine charity. Oh divine love ! inflame then my heart, and drive out of it all other love !

II. As God gave to Adam a spouse taken out of his side, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone ; in like manner God gave to his Son, and his Son took to himself, a spouse, which is the church, taken out of his side, cleansed in his blood, pure and spotless. For the first Adam was in that the model of the second who was to come, with this difference, that the first, as well as his wife and children, was terrestrial, and the second, as well as his spouse and his children, are celestial. The church

is the body of Jesus Christ, and we are his members, drawn from his side, from his flesh, and from his bones. God was pleased that not only all mankind should come from the first, by being born of his spouse, but that his spouse herself, mother of all mankind, should be herself taken from the first man. And in this again the first Adam was the model of the second that was to come; for so it is ordained by God, who requires not only that every one, be of the number of his faithful adorers, to obtain the grace of justification, and to arrive at salvation, should be begotten by the church; but also that the church herself, the spouse of Jesus Christ, should come from him, that she should be taken and formed out of his side. In fine, as the union of Adam and Eve in one flesh was the figure and the model of the union of Jesus Christ with his church; so the union of Jesus Christ with his church is the model of the marriage of Christians, which is thereby become a great sacrament between Jesus Christ and the church. How many mysteries prepared long beforehand by God, and united together by him in Jesus Christ.

III. Besides the mysteries we have just explained, the holy fathers also

recognize, in the side of Jesus laid open, the source of all the sacraments, since they are all the effect of his love, and the price of his blood. But the water and blood which here flow from his side more particularly remind us of baptism and the Eucharist. It is in memory of what happened here that, in the sacred mysteries, water is mixed with the wine. Under whichever species we receive the Eucharist, we receive the blood of Jesus Christ, which flowed from his sacred heart. From whatever stain we are washed, whether from original sin in baptism, or actual sin in penance, we are always purified by the water which flowed from the side of Jesus Christ. It is not surprising that the church should have established a festival in honour of this divine heart—this heart laid open for us—this heart, the centre of love, and the source of so many gifts. He who pierced the heart of Jesus profited of the treasures which flow from that source; the church has enrolled him among her martyrs. Let us pray to him, that he may obtain for us grace to be as faithful and as grateful as himself.

THIRD POINT.

I. Why was it the will of Jesus that his side should be opened?—Besides the mysteries it contained, another reason may be considered; to wit, that thereby the death of Jesus, as likewise the reality of his flesh, or of his human nature, is ascertained in a manner which leaves no room for doubt; and it should seem that the holy evangelist had this reason in view, by entering so much into detail. What strange errors does not the mind of man engender, when he chooses to reason on the works of God, instead of submitting to apostolical authority! While some have denied the resurrection of our Lord, others have denied his divinity; and others have required proof that he was really a man, and really suffered death. It is for this that St. John here insists upon the truth of his testimony, relating nothing but what he has seen. It is for this that, in proof of this truth, he says elsewhere, *There are three that give testimony upon earth—the Spirit, water, and blood; and these three are one.* He indeed was a real man, and really died, who having received the spirit, and having had his side opened after he had given

up his spirit, poured forth blood and water ; for this blood could come only from the heart, which is the last to lose its vital warmth ; and this water could come only from the pericardium, which surrounds the heart. Restless spirits have impugned these truths, because they could not comprehend the infinite love which God has shewn to men ; but this love would not be worthy of God, if it were not infinite and incomprehensible. Ah ! I believe it, O Lord, though I cannot understand it ; I believe that the Word of God was made man, and that this Man-God suffered and died for all mankind. I believe that God has loved us so much as to give us his Son, and that this Son has loved us so much as to deliver himself up, and to die for us. Shall we then be ungrateful to God, because he has loved us in a manner surpassing all comprehension ?

II. Why was it the will of Jesus that his side should be opened after his death ?—The first reason was that Jesus might not be thought to die, like other men, by a necessity of nature ; which might have been supposed, if he had died in consequence of a mortal blow being given him. He wished therefore it should appear that he died freely, and

by his own choice—that he did not obey death, but that death was obedient to him, as the Centurion understood, and those that were with him. The second reason was—to complete the figure of the formation of the church; for it was from the side of Adam asleep that his spouse was taken, to shew that it would be during the sleep (that is to say, the death) of the Son of God, that the church, his spouse, should be formed, and should come out of his opened side. The third reason was—to observe the order of the mysteries; for Jesus died to destroy death and sin, and his side was opened, therein to found a church glorious, pure, and simple. Now order required that sin should be destroyed before the grace of righteousness was given, and that the abolition of sin should precede justification.

III. Why was it the will of Jesus that his side should remain open after his resurrection? Jesus, after his resurrection, not only retains the wound in his side, but also the four wounds of his hands and feet: he not only retains these marks upon earth after his resurrection, but also in heaven after his ascension. Why? in order upon earth

that his apostles may see them, acknowledge them, verify them, put, if necessary, their fingers and hands into them; in order that we, who have not seen them, may believe them, put our confidence in them, and find therein an asylum in our temptations and sufferings; in order that, at the last day, they may be seen by the whole universe, that the ways of God may be justified, the saints encouraged, and sinners confounded; but, above all, in order that, in heaven, where the obscurity of faith will be banished by the light of glory, and where the perfect enjoyment of the sovereign good will leave nothing to desire or hope for, that in heaven love alone may reign for ever. In this blessed abode our King and Saviour will be distinguished by his five wounds, and by the immensity of his love.

O glorified and eternal love! begin here below to reign over my heart, and inflame it! but, above all, protect me, preserve me from that profane, shameful, and perishable love which usurps thy name, and holds out to us its criminal pleasures, only to make us lose the eternal delights which thou hast prepared for us! To preserve myself from them, O my Saviour, I will take refuge

in that asylum which was opened for me by the spear which pierced thy divine heart! This sacred heart will never be closed ; I will plunge myself then into this fountain of grace, that I may there be in safety from the enemies of my salvation ; I will wash myself there without ceasing, and strengthen myself in that salutary bath formed by the blood and water which flowed from thence ! Amen.

THE END.

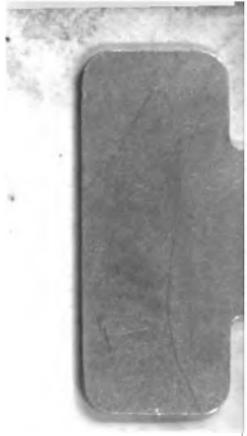
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